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MRS. CAROLINE
LEE HENTZ

THE LOST DAUGHTER;

AND OTHER

STORIES OF THE HEART.

BY

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ:

AUTHOR OF "LINDA," "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE," "RENA," "EOLINE," "PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE," "LOVE AFTER MARRIAGE," ETC.

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"Oh! she was all!
My fame, my friendship, and my love of arms,
All stoop'd to her; my blood was her possession:
Deep in the secret foldings of my heart,
She liv'd with life, and far the dearer she."
Young's Revenge.

"To say he lov'd,
Was to affirm what oft his eye avouch'd,
What many an action testified, and yet,
What wanted confirmation of his tongue."
J. Sheridan Knowles.

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THE LOST DAUGHTER.

THE LOST DAUGHTER:

CHAPTER I.

It was night; Father Angelo sat alone in his hermitage, the light of a solitary lamp illuminating his august figure. An open Bible lay upon his knee, his arms were folded across his breast, while his upturned eyes were fixed upon the dark ceiling which arched above him. It was a night of winds and clouds; the foliage of the trees swept sighingly against the uncurtained windows, the rushing sound of swollen waters came hurriedly and mourningly on the ear, and the low, plaintive howl of the watch-dog rose when the sobs of the gale subsided, as if to tell his master of the desolate aspect of all things abroad. Every thing within wore the sober, gray tint of the rock near which the little cabin was moored. The walls were of a dim gray; a robe of gray serge, confined around the waist by a leathern band, covered the majestic figure of Father Angelo, and his long, gray locks and flowing beard mingled their silvery shadows with the folds of his monk-like robe. There was one object which stood out dark and imposing in the twilight dimness of the apartment, and that was an ancient-looking organ, whose gilded and massy pipes, dim with age, seemed coeval with the ancestral-looking being who inhabited that lone spot. All the light streamed around the head and bust of the hermit, glimmering on the pages which lay unfolded upon his knee, and falling, like a dim fringe of faded gold, round the edge of his ash-colored raiment.

All at once, a faint, wailing cry, heard at the very door of the cabin, mingled with the sighs of the wind. Father Angelo started from his devout abstraction, and bent his ear in the direction of the sound. At first, he thought it

the moan of some wandering night-bird, then the low whine of the watch-dog's dream; but it grew louder and more distinct, and was evidently the expression of human weakness and suffering. The hermit arose, while his tall form towered grandly upward within the low walls, and, tightening the girdle round his waist, as if strengthening himself for some unknown conflict, he opened the door, through which a stormy gust came rushing, threatening to extinguish his lamp, whose black, unsnuffed wick indicated the long reverie in which he had been indulging.

"Father of Mercies!" exclaimed he, as he bent over the threshold, while the wail ascended, as from under a weight of down. He stooped lower and lower, then bent one knee, and stretched his arms toward a white object lying right on the rocky steps of the door. He raised it with trembling hands, and bore it to the light. Just as he reached the lamp, it struggled, the downy wrapper fell from the upper part, a pair of waxen white arms broke loose from the envelop, and a little cherub infant face beamed upon the sight. Unlike those of youth and maturity, the tears of infancy leave no disfiguring traces on the moist cheeks; they are rather like the dew on the young flower, making it brighter and fairer as soon as it is exhaled by the sun. Father Angelo continued to gaze down on his strange burden in an ecstacy of wonder. It was the first time infant innocence had ever been cradled in his powerful arms; the first time its pure breath, mingling with his, had penetrated, like a sweet south wind, to his innermost spirit, whispering of heaven and heavenly things. Pleased with its transfer from darkness to light, and its release from the smothering folds that mantled its face, the infant fixed its soft, bright eyes on the face of the hermit with a look so helpless and confiding, it thrilled through his thick gray serge robe, and made him clasp the child closer to his breast. Feeling the grateful warmth, the infant twisted its little dimpled fingers in the silvery beard that flowed down like a rill on its bosom.

"Father of the fatherless!" cried he, lifting his eyes, which, by a strange fascination, had been riveted on the helpless being before him, in a heavenward direction, "is it thou who has sent this innocent one to me—me, the aged and the lone? Have the clouds round about thy

throne opened, and one of thy cherubs winged its way from Paradise to this rock-built nest of mine? Poor, little innocent!" continued he, again fixing his prayerful eyes on its fair, still brow, "what a home for thee! How can this breast, so long closed to every earthly affection, cherish a tender nursling like thee, who should even now be slumbering on a mother's gentle bosom? Poor, wind-blown blossom, thou hast fallen on a bleak and barren soil!"

The deep voice of the hermit, softened by emotion, murmured gently in the infant's ear—for, young as it was, it was susceptible to the impression of human kindness—and it looked in his face and smiled. Has any sunbeam ever visited this darkened world of ours half so beautiful as the smile of infancy? The little rose-leaf lips curling so delicately, the clear, translucent eye lighted up with such heavenly lustre, the soft, round cheek dimpling and smoothing, and dimpling again, like the play of waters in the sun, while a tender, brooding sound issues from the dove-like throat. How lovely, how touching this assemblage of infant charms! Father Angelo felt his very soul dissolving within him. How strange he looked, that tall, monklike, sublime old man, holding with such tender care, the frail, down-wrapped foundling! So absorbed was he in his novel emotions, he did not heed the opening of a side door, or the entrance of a woman dressed in a peasant's garb, evidently of a subordinate rank.

"The Lord save us!" she exclaimed, when, after stepping cautiously forward, she beheld the smiling babe cooing in her master's arms—"the Lord save us!" she continued, elevating both hands parallel with her eyes, "how came that weanling here?"

"The Lord, whom you so lightly invoke, only knows," answered Father Angelo. "Take the child, Naomi. To your care I commit it. As you would make a golden bed in heaven, let your breast be a pillow of down to this poor deserted, but Heaven-sent child."

He laid it gently in Naomi's arms, then lighting his lantern, took his oaken staff, and went forth into the darkness of the night.

"Who knows," thought he, "but the desolate mother may even now be wandering near, to learn the fate of her offspring? God often works out his holy will by human

instruments. Some one must have left that forlorn one at my door, who doubtless needs our cherishing care as much, nay, more; for nothing but abandonment and despair could have prompted a deed so rash."

He held the lantern so as to illuminate the shadows which hung round the jagged, massy, and moss-grown rocks, against which the cabin leaned, and by which, in front, it was partially hidden; but no form was concealed in the gloom. Then lowering it, so that its light streamed upon the ground, he caught a glimpse of the waters that, made turbid by the late rains, rolled dark and sullen, threatening to overflow the banks, and dashing headlong and foaming over a bed of rocks just below the cabin. With a troubled spirit, he approached nearer and nearer the stream, which looked darker and darker in contrast with the rays that flashed upon it in a red line with comet-like brilliancy. The dull, heavy, continuous gurgling of the waters struck coldly on the heart of the hermit—it sounded so dirge-like and sad, so much like a funeral wail over the drowning or the dead. There was one spot where the rocks made a kind of dam, and where the current drifted strongest, as if angry with the obstacle which impeded its course. There he beheld an object on which he at once concentrated his gaze with an intensity of horror it is impossible to describe. A woman, whose head and shoulders rested on the bank, against which the waves had dashed her, lay with white, still face, that gleamed ghastly and cold above her dark-colored garments, over which the water foamed. Father Angelo, groaning at the realization of all his fears, placed his lantern on the ground, and, stooping down, endeavored to raise the lifeless body before him. The long hair, sweeping down, twisted with the slender shrubs that fringed the bank, and arrested his movements. With a shudder, he disentangled the lifeless and dripping locks, and, leaving his lantern behind, he turned with hasty step toward the cabin.

For twenty years, Father Angelo had slept undisturbed in that lone spot, his only inmate the faithful domestic who had followed him to the hermitage he had chosen as a retreat from the world and its cares. And now, with a helpless infant on one side, and a drowned woman on the other, he stood for a moment bewildered and horror-

stricken. But Naomi, who was as remarkable for the energy as the fidelity of her character, deposited the now sleeping infant on a bed of blankets, and assisted her master in his efforts to awaken the apparently extinguished spark of life in the pale and ghastly body of the stranger. But, after hours of fruitless endeavor, they ceased, under the conviction that there was but one Being who could animate that cold form, and restore the mother to her child.

"Let the dead rest," said Father Angelo, solemnly; "vain is the help of man. Compose her limbs for the grave, Naomi, for she hath no more place with the living. I go to pray that this mournful event may be sanctified to our everlasting good."

Naomi was left alone with the dead mother and the sleeping infant. The soft, warm breathings of the latter stole balmily on an atmosphere which the presence of death had chilled, and neutralized its power. Naomi's strong mind resisted the debasing superstition common to her class, and, while she set herself gravely and mournfully to her task, no weak terror of the helpless and motionless being before her—alas! being it could no longer be called—benumbed her hand or glazed her eye. The poor victim was beautiful and fair to look upon. She seemed to have died without a struggle, for her features were placid; and, though a faint violet tinge shaded her mouth, a gentle smile lingered round the lips. It was only in the half-closed, glassy, soulless eyes that the triumph of death was seen; all else seemed the serenity of sleep. Naomi wrapped the body in a linen sheet, while she dried the garments saturated in the stream. They were of the finest material, and showed the wearer belonged to no vulgar class.

All night, Naomi kept watch over the sleeping and the dead. The morning sunbeams lighted up the pallid face of the suicide; its evening rays fell upon her grave.

The infant, thus cradled by Providence in a rocky nest, found therein the down of tenderness, soft as that which broods over the unfledged bird. There was nothing about it to indicate its parents' names; but Naomi discovered a paper in its bosom, which she gave to Father Angelo. It contained these few thrilling words:—

"A wife, forsaken by her husband, who, in the extremity

of her despair, is about to commit her soul unsummoned into the hands of the great and dreadful God, intrusts her child to thy keeping. I have heard of thy goodness and sanctity, and I come, a heart-broken pilgrim, to lay my offering at thy feet. Reject it not, as thou wouldst not be rejected by thy Saviour, when soul and body are parting. Far from that world where my happiness has been wrecked, let her be nurtured and sheltered. If possible, let her never be exposed to the influence of human passion. I dedicate her to God. I intrust her to thee. The name she bears is unhallowed, given with the baptism of a mother's tears. Let it perish with me, for it is my own. Man of God, pray for the soul that, too feeble to withstand the ills of life, is yet strong enough to rush into an awful eternity."

This sad and only relic of the unhappy and misguided being who had left him so strange a legacy, was carefully preserved, as it might hereafter furnish a clue to the birth of the infant.

"She shall be called Blanche," said the hermit, while his quivering lips and moistened eyes were eloquent of the past. Then taking the child, and raising it in his arms toward heaven, he added, in a solemn voice, "Oh! Thou, whose spirit did once descend in the form of a dove on the head of the Incarnate, let its wings hover over this innocent infant, and save it from the polluting influence of sin and passion! I renew the dedication made by its dying mother, and lay this spotless lamb, as a living sacrifice, on thine holy altar!"

Thus consecrated by prayer, this foster-child of destiny was received into the deep shades of Rockrest; and there bloomed into childhood, knowing nothing of the world beyond the wild stream that bounded the solitary's sequestered domain. The cabin was situated in a kind of wilderness, far from the public road, and it was only by following the course of the stream the hapless suicide could have found that unfrequented spot. Naomi, who possessed that vigorous age which partakes of the nature of eternal youth, attended to all the wants of the household, which were indeed few, and chiefly supplied by the fruits and vegetables which flourished under her careful hand. About once a week, she appeared with a large basket on her arm, winding along a by-path, on her way to the near

est town, where she could obtain all needed additions to their simple store. During her absence, the young Blanche would remain with Father Angelo, for whom she already manifested the most tender and fervent attachment. She would sit for hours on a little stool at his feet, listening to the music of the organ, while he drew forth its solemn, religious notes, till a long, deep sigh, bursting from the very heart of the child, showed that she was oppressed by the heavy grandeur of the strains; then he would take her in his arms, and placing her little delicate fingers on the keys, she smiled as the soft tones gushed from under them, believing them all her own, and nestling her rosy cheek in his long white beard, looked like a flower amid Alpine snows. As she grew older, and her thoughts found expression, it was the most interesting thing in the world to watch the development of a mind, unfolding under such peculiar circumstances and strange influences. In the midst of solitude, the companion of age, she dreamed not of the existence of childhood or youth. To her, Father Angelo was the incarnation of beauty and power, and she clung to him with a love, and looked up to him with a worship, such as the creature feels for the Creator. He talked to her of God: she beheld her God in him, his goodness and glory, his majesty and love; and he did, indeed, resemble, in lineament and expression, the magnificent figures which Raphael's bold hand has sketched of Jehovah presiding over the birth of Creation, and calling out light from the gloom of chaos. He was old; but his old age was that of the rock which sheltered him, firm and strong. It was that of the everlasting mountain, covered with perpetual snow, that gives one an impression of power and duration. His ample forehead, covered with living snow, was a tablet grooved by the hand of time, where hieroglyphics were traced more sublime than Egyptian priesthood ever knew. His eye, dark, grave, and serene, had a depth of meaning in its solemn light the sounding line of thought could scarcely fathom. It had the upward glance of prayer, the downward gaze of intense meditation; seldom did it seem fixed on any present object, except the little Blanche, and then language could not describe its sad, earnest, pitying expression.

The first time Blanche ever saw herself, she was stand-

ing by Father Angelo on the borders of the stream whose waters had been her mother's winding-sheet. It was a clear, sunny day, and glass is not more translucent than the clear, blue surface that reflected the cherub form of the child and the venerable figure of the hermit, hand in hand, the most beautiful personification of childhood and age that perhaps ever stood side by side.

Blanche bent over the stream, and smiled on her own sweet image. The sweet image smiled back again. She stretched out her fair, dimpled arms, and the fair, watery arms responded with the same loving movement.

"Look, father, look!" she cried, "there is you; and there—who is that little one standing where I am, too?"

"It is yourself, my dear child. The water is like glass, and gives back your own image as well as mine. As you see me on the bank and in the stream, so do I behold two little Blanches."

"But why didn't God make me like you?" asked the child. "Why didn't he make another like me? Oh, Father, I love myself down in the water! I want to take hold of myself. Can I?"

And, stooping over, the child would have fallen, destroying the mirror and her own life, had not the hermit held her back; and, raising her in his arms, he sat down under an aged oak, and talked to her of the great Maker of all things till her young spirit glowed within her. He told her as she saw her own image in the water, God could see his image in her heart while it was pure and clear like that water; but if sin entered and polluted her thoughts he would turn away his face in sorrow and anger, and it would be left dark and troubled like that stream, when the wind and the storm swept over it. He told her, too, how the Almighty once came into the world to bless and to save it; how he was once a babe in a manger, then a little feeble child like herself; and how, when a man of sorrows, he took little children in his arms and blessed them, and said of such was the kingdom of heaven. Blanche, with her starry eyes riveted on his face, drank in these divine truths, and, like the mother of our Lord, in after years she pondered on all these things.

Is it strange that she grew up the purest and most innocent of created beings?

Father Angelo, whose mind was richly imbued with classic as well as divine lore, poured into hers the chastened wisdom of Greece and Rome. He had banished from his library every book which treated of love and passion, and even the page of history which described the ruin caused by unlicensed feeling and lawless crime was a sealed volume to her. She read nothing but what he selected for her perusal; she had not a thought concealed from him, whom she venerated as the best representative of the Deity on earth.

He taught her to play on the organ, and to modulate her voice to sing. She manifested the most intense love for music. It satisfied her love of the beautiful, of whose existence she was unconscious. It stood to her in the place of youth, beauty and love, from whose association she seemed forever debarred. Whenever she sang, or listened to Father Angelo while he pressed the sounding bellows, and waked the instrument to devotional harmony, her eyes would fill with tears, her cheeks would flush and turn pale, her hands tremble, and her lips quiver. The latent music of her being welled up from its hidden spring, and, as it flowed and undulated, her transparent countenance betrayed all the motions within.

Thus passed the first fifteen years of the young life of Blanche. Time, which had expanded her juvenile charms into the soft bloom of girlhood, had not perceptibly changed the noble lineaments of Father Angelo. His majestic form still towered like the palm tree of the desert; his clear, dark eye still beamed with the radiance of the western sun. He seemed like one of those prophets of old, sanctified and set apart as a vessel of the Lord, into whom he had poured his inspiration, and anointed with the oil of his grace—

> "Remote from men with God he passed his days.
> Prayer all his business. all his pleasure praise;
> A life so sacred, such serene repose
> Seemed Heaven itself!"

till an incident occurred which disturbed its peaceful calm and left an impression, never to be effaced, on the heart of Blanche.

She was sitting under that aged oak, whose gray

strength and unwithered vigor reminded her of Father Angelo, on the brink of that stream on whose unceasing flow she was never weary of gazing; the shadow of the oaken branches rested on the water in lengthening lines, indicating the declining day. While she thus sat, half reclining on the grass, in an attitude of childish abandonment, she beheld a boat come gliding down the stream, in which were two figures. The novelty of the sight chained her to the spot, though her first impulse was to fly to Father Angelo and ask him the meaning of the strange phenomenon. The occupants of the boat were two young men, one of whom was plying the oars with animated grace, the other reclining indolently by his side. The moment, however, he caught a glimpse of Blanche, he spoke in a low voice to his companion, who, resting on his oars, suffered the skiff to float gently near the bank where she was seated. Such a figure in such a scene seemed more like a picture of the imagination than a living reality. The peculiarity of her costume alone would have riveted their attention. The only direction which Father Angelo had ever given Naomi with regard to her wardrobe was that she should be clothed in white, the only proper raiment, he remarked, for a Heaven-dedicated child. She wore a loose robe, such as angels are represented wearing in the artist's dream, which was confined around the waist by a white girdle. Her arms were bare, her hair, not curling but waving, partly swept the grass and partly floated over her bosom, while her eyes, lustrous as the heavens and limpid as the stream, were turned with an innocent, wild, shy, wondering, yet admiring look on the first youthful specimen of humanity she had ever yet beheld. So deep was the seclusion of their dwelling, so watchful the guardianship of Father Angelo and Naomi, that no nun in a cloister was ever more sequestered from intercourse with mankind than this young girl. Indeed her seclusion was far deeper than the cloistered nun's, for *she* does meet the dark-stoled monks, and, through the grate of her cell, she can look on many a human face divine. Father Angelo, who had been driven by one of wildest tempest of passion into the haven of Rockrest himself, who had seen the mother of Blanche a victim to the same moral desolation, and who had vowed upon her

grave to shield her child from the dread elements whose fury they had both known by fatal experience, resolved that hers should be a vestal life, and that man should never be allowed to make himself a rival of the God who had proclaimed himself, amid the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai, a jealous God. The languid young man, wakened to sudden life, stepped upon the bank, and, raising his hat gracefully from his head, approached Blanche, who, roused from her trance of wonder and admiration, sprang from her grassy couch, and was about to fly toward the cabin.

"Do not let us alarm you," said he, in a low and gentle voice. "We are strangers, who, led by a spirit of adventure to navigate an unknown stream, find ourselves so near the close of day, we would thank you if you could direct us to a place of shelter for the night, if there is one near."

The voice of the angel welcoming the spirit at the gate of Paradise could hardly sound sweeter to the soul than his youthful accents to the ear of Blanche, accustomed only to the venerable accents of Father Angelo, and the kind, but coarser tones of the good Naomi. A sudden revelation of another life, a life unknown before, flashed upon her. The eyes of the young stranger, beaming with admiration, were riveted upon her face, and, for the first time, a deepening blush stole glowingly over the lilies of her cheek.

"Father Angelo dwells in that cabin behind the rock," she replied. "There is no other habitation near."

"Do you know him? Will he be willing to receive us?" inquired the young man, exchanging glances with his companion, who, leaning over the edge of the skiff, waited with manifest interest the result of the conversation.

"He is a Christian," replied Blanche, with holy simplicity; "and God tells us to be kind unto strangers. Yonder he comes. I will ask him."

At the sight of Father Angelo's tall and august form, looking still taller and more ancestral in its robes of solemn gray, his long, white, flowing beard and snowy locks uncovered to the breeze, the strangers again looked at each other with a peculiar embarrassment.

"Ah, I see now where we are," exclaimed the speaker.

"This must be the Hermit of Rockrest. But you, young maiden, surely you do not dwell with him!"

"He is my father on earth, given me by my Father in Heaven," answered the orphan recluse, unconscious that her language was very different from what the strangers were wont to hear from the lips of youthful beauty.

By this time, the hermit had reached the spot where the stranger stood, and, as Blanche raised her innocent eyes to his face, she, for the first time, trembled and shrunk before its severe and majestic expression. Why did a strange feeling of shame, unknown before, roll like a sultry cloud over the spotless surface of her thoughts! Why did she bow her head till her long, loose locks mantled the blushes that burned upon her cheeks?

"Blanche," said the hermit, raising his hand in the direction of the cabin, and bending upon her a grave, rebuking glance. She understood his motion, and obeyed it, though not without casting her eyes one moment toward the young stranger, whose countenance flashed like lightning as she passed. He dared not detain her; for there stood that awful-looking old man, leaning upon his staff like one of the prophets of old, as if ready to call down the thunders of Heaven.

"Young man," said Father Angelo, "what is your errand here?"

"We have wandered out of our way," he replied, awed by the voice and manner of the hermit. "We wished to find shelter for the night, for the day is almost spent."

"The moon will light the path of your return," replied the hermit. "If you were weary travelers, girded for toil, and employed in the service of my Divine Master, I would give you food and shelter and rest; but the sons of pleasure can find no welcome with us. Go back to your gay companions, and disturb not the abode of the solitary. Ye are of the world. We are not of the world. You and I can no more mingle than the rock and the stream. Why do you linger? I do not wish to be harsh and inhospitable," he added, in a softened tone; "but I cannot suffer the breath of that world from which I have forever withdrawn, to pollute the solitude of this heaven-dedicated spot. The earth is broad. 'Tis but a narrow path I

have chosen to walk in. Respect my rights, and invade them no more."

There was something so commanding in the appearance and voice of Father Angelo, that the young man dared not linger. With an air of haughtiness, struggling with the awe which he could not shake off, he turned away, jumped into the skiff by the side of his companion, whose dipping oars soon flashed brightly in the rays of the setting sun.

"What did the young man say that covered your cheeks with blushes?" asked Father Angelo of Blanche, as they sat together in the light of the moon, that streamed into the low window of the cabin, and sprinkled with silver the faded gilding of the organ.

"Nothing, father," replied Blanche. "He only asked for shelter, which I promised him in your name. 'I was a stranger, and ye took me in,' said our Saviour, and you have often repeated the words to me. Why, father, did you send them away in anger, instead of opening your door to receive them?"

"Did you wish them to remain, Blanche?"

"I did, father," she replied, without looking up: for that strange feeling of confusion, which she had never known before, dimmed the crystal mirror of her eye. "They were beautiful and fair to look upon, and the voice of him who addressed me sweet as the sound of the distant waterfall. Surely, father, if the sons of men resemble these, they cannot be the wicked beings you have taught me to shun. These must have been angels; for the Bible says those who welcome strangers, sometimes entertain angels unawares."

"My child! my child!" cried the hermit, in an earnest and troubled tone. "Remember how the serpent, with his beguiling tongue, charmed the mother of mankind. Remember how Lucifer was transformed to an angel of light. Oh, thou Guardian of innocence," continued he, lifting up his invoking hands over her innocent head, "let not the tempter invade this new Eden of my chastened heart! Once, once I have been banished from my paradise, in which the serpent had stolen. Spare me, O God, another trial! Not me alone—not for myself I pray. Plunge me in the furnace glowing with sevenfold heat, if it be thine infinite will; but spare this spotless lamb—this

lamb of the flock of Gilead, whom I have reserved for thy holy altar!"

Awed by the solemnity of his words and manner, Blanche sunk upon her knees and bowed her head upon his lap. There was silence for a few moments, when the hermit spoke—

"Look up, my child. See how the moonbeams sparkle on the water. How peaceful and smiling it looks! And yet those same wavelets, now calm as the fleecy vault above, were woven as a shroud around your mother's form, and prepared her for the grave where she now slumbers. I have never told you the story of your infancy; but it is time that I should warn you of the doom which was hers, and show you the lines traced by the hand of misguided passion and fatal experience."

"You told me that God had given me to your arms," said the trembling Blanche, "that I might be devoted to his service, and pass my days in prayer and praise. Tell me not of sorrow and sin; it makes me wish to die."

"When temptation approaches, the armor of defense must be prepared. Better, far better to know of the rocks and quicksands that lie beneath the waves of existence, than wait till life's frail bark is dashed against them by the fury of the tempest and broken into shivers."

Then, taking her hand, Father Angelo led her down to the very brink of the stream, and showed her the rocks over which the current foamed bright and white in the moonlight, and told her how dark and angry was the scene on the night when her mother lay cold and stiff in her liquid shroud, while *she*, a weeping infant, reclined beneath his threshold. Then, winding through a path shaded by shrubbery and long grass, he carried her to the grave, now scarcely distinguishable from the greensward around it, where the victim of passion slept in lonely and unawaking slumber.

"Oh, my father," cried the weeping Blanche, rising from the grave of her mother, and throwing herself into his arms, "save me from myself—save me from the world! But when you die—for you say the aged die before the young—who will shield me from temptation and guard me from evil?"

"He who committed you to my keeping will give his angels charge concerning thee, and they will bear thee upon

their wings, and cover thee with them as a shield, 'Fear not, for I am with thee,' saith the Lord Almighty."

From this night, a change came over the spirit of Blanche. Shadows, coming and going, flitted over the heavenly serenity of her brow, and a dewy softness ofttimes vailed the clear lustre of her eyes. She was both happier and sadder than before. The stream, on whose margin she had so loved to recline, no longer whispered to her of everlasting peace. Its murmurs told the story of her mother's sorrows, and she saw in its cold bosom the image of her death-chilled form. But while these remembrances came darkly and appallingly on one side, on the other glided the vision of the youthful strangers. Again she beheld the graceful figure standing at her side, with an eye bright as the sun, yet soft as the waning moon. Wherever she was, that phantom form was near. Even when she knelt in prayer, it came and knelt at her side, and she could hear its voice of music mingling with the deep and organ-like tones of Father Angelo.

That one brief moment was never to be forgotten. She might linger in that solitude till her locks were white as the snowy locks of the hermit, till she, too, passed into the long, polar winter of life, but its memory would still be to her a vernal bloom, unchilled by its snows, a silver fountain uncongealed by its frost.

CHAPTER II.

VAIN theory, that in solitude the passions die! If, in plunging into its depths, one could leave behind him that restless thing, the heart, then indeed there would be peace; but the wind stirs the foliage of the lonely mountain as well as that of the peopled plain; and wherever the stormy elements of life exist, they will burst forth in strength, the greater for their long quiescence. Solitude is the empire of passion—not its grave.

Blanche no longer sat by the margin of the stream alone. Father Angelo was ever at her side, ready to guard

and sustain, ever talking to her of Heaven and heavenly things. In vain she watched for the gliding boat and the coming stranger.

One evening, Father Angelo was reading to her from the Divine Volume; she sat against the organ, whose dark and massive form brought out in strong relief her own white-robed figure. Naomi plied her needle at a little distance, listening with reverend attention to the accents of her aged master. It was a peaceful scene, and a sweet quietude rested on the young face of Blanche. The hermit was reading the history of the daughter of Jephthah, and she saw in it a type of her own destiny. At that moment, it seemed to her a glorious one, and her eye began to kindle with a holy inspiration.

There was a step heard on the threshold. The footstep of the stranger in that solitude was as startling as the print on the sand in Crusoe's desert isle. Blanche trembled. Father Angelo rose with a clouded brow, and, opening the door, the young stranger, whose image had haunted the memory of Blanche, stood before him. The hermit drew back with a cold and stately air; but a slow burst of irrepressible delight illumined the face of Blanche. Faint from excess of joy, she leaned against the organ, and clasped both hands over her heart, to still its wild pulsations.

"Why hast thou come again, young man?" said Father Angelo, in stern accents. "I told thee the world was wide, and that there was room enough in it for thee and me, but that there must be a broad path between us, stranger! I cannot bid thee welcome, for my soul is troubled within me. Something tells me that thy coming is the herald of sorrow."

"Nay, not so, father," cried the young man, with a deprecating smile; and placing some letters in his hand. "Read these, and you will see that I am no nameless adventurer, unworthy of your regard, but the son of a nobleman, and the companion of the noblest of the land."

"Clarence, son of Clarence!" repeated the hermit, glancing his eye over the letters and again folding them. "Titles are of no estimation in my eyes. That you are a descendant of the King of king reflects upon you far greater honor."

"To be the heir of an honorable name, unstained by crime

and adorned by talents, is a distinction of which a young man may well be proud," answered Clarence, with unconscious haughtiness.

"The echoes of fame are never heard within these rock-bound walls," replied the hermit. "What," added he. commandingly, "what is all this to me?" Then, turning suddenly to Blanche, continued, "Blanche, retire with Naomi."

Blanche rose, with a fading cheek, but Clarence sprung forward and arrested her departure.

"No, stay," he impetuously cried. "It was for you I came. Life has been but one dream of you since I beheld you under the shadow of the oak. Leave me not, I entreat, but pray this stern-hearted and inflexible old man to look benignantly on me, for your sake."

"Oh, father," said Blanche, laying her hand imploringly on the arm of Father Angelo, "if not for mine, for the sake of the dear Redeemer, speak kindly to this young man, and bid him stay."

"My child, my blessed child, you know not what you ask. If I bid him remain, peace will vanish. The image of a holy God will be hurled from its altar, and an earthly idol usurp its place. Remember that a dying mother dedicated you to Heaven, as an expiation for her own sinful idolatry. Remember that every year, as it has rolled over your head, I have renewed the solemn consecration, which your own heart has sanctioned, and attesting angels witnessed. Blanche, you will not, you cannot prove false to these threefold vows."

"She cannot, she will not prove false to the impulses of nature and truth," exclaimed the young man keeping his fascinating gaze on the face, which never before had glowed beneath the glance of love. "Her heart abjures such unnatural obligations. It already throbs in unison with mine. I see it; I feel it. Heaven created us for each other; and by keeping us asunder, after having once met, you defeat the purposes of the most High, and doom to solitary wretchedness two beings whose mutual joy your blessing ought to crown. Old man," continued he, with increasing fervor, "in the frozen calm of age have you entirely forgotten the memories of youth? Does no remembrance plead for love like mine, no form of beauty

like hers rise amid the dimness of the past, reminding you of the omnipotence of passion?"

"Beware!" exclaimed the hermit, while his powerful form shivered with sudden emotion, and a cold moisture gleamed upon his forehead. "Warm the chilled and torpid serpent if you dare, and brave its sting, but uncoil not the serpent memories of my youth, rouse them not from their long lethargy. Young man, I have loved and suffered—sinned and sorrowed, as I trust you may never sorrow and never sin. All the waters of the ocean could never efface the remembrance of those days of strife and passion; but I humbly trust the dark stain they left upon my soul has been washed out in the blood of the Lamb. Here, in this solitude, I have found *peace* after the wreck of joy. Here, I have fostered this pure blossom of innocence to present it an offering of sweet-smelling savor unto Heaven. She is guileless and happy. Leave her, as you found her, in the bosom of tranquillity. Seek a companion in pleasure among the daughters of men, and tempt not a child of God into the paths of a polluted world."

As he spoke, he folded one arm around Blanche and drew her closely to him, while the folds of his gray robe mingled with her white flowing raiment. He bent his head till his wintry locks blended with the vernal luxuriance of hers; and tears, slowly falling like rain from a cold cloud, glittered on her hair. The young man was moved, but his emotion only gave warmth and strength to his eloquence.

"Father," said he, bending his knee, for it seemed an act of reverence due to this sublime old man, "listen to me for her sake, if not for mine. When you are gone, and you must be near the end of your pilgrimage, who will protect this young and helpless being? Who will shelter her from the storms you so much dread? Would you leave her in this wilderness with no guardian but a woman who already must feel the infirmities of life stealing upon her? Have you never thought of this?"

"God never forsakes those who put their trust in him," answered the hermit, looking devoutly upward. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge; and is *she* not of more value than they?"

"Let *her* speak," said Clarence; "surely you would not

bind her, an unwilling victim, to vows made in her infancy. The God to whom you have devoted her will not accept a heartless sacrifice. Speak, Blanche—let me call you by your own sweet name—and tell me if you are not willing to leave this desolate spot for the home of joy and love I came to offer you. There you can erect an altar to your God, and offer him as pure an incense as ascends from this rocky shrine. He is not confined to this lone spot. He fills immensity with His presence, and wherever a human heart beats, there is His temple. Blanche, we will worship Him together. Does not my prayer find an echo in your soul? Speak, and tell me if my spirit pleads alone."

Blanche, who had been clinging to the hermit in unutterable agitation, gradually released her hold, and, gliding down upon her knees, buried her face in the folds of his robe.

"Oh, father," she cried, "I dare not speak. I fear your anger, but I feel as if invisible hands were drawing me toward him; and if you send him from me, it seems as if my life-chords would break asunder. Have pity upon me, O my father, and cast me not off in thy displeasure. I cannot help finding the face of the stranger fair, and his voice sweet to my ear."

"Alas! alas!" said Father Angelo, tenderly raising her in his arms, and looking mournfully on her face. "For more than fifteen years have I borne you on my heart as the one lone flower sent to sweeten my blighted existence, and the stranger of a day must come to rob me of its fragrance, and leave me, like my own sheltering rock, bleak and bare."

"No, no, father," exclaimed Blanche. "I do not ask to leave. I only pray that he may remain with me. Then you will have two flowers, instead of one, to gladden your life."

A proud smile played for a moment on the lips of Clarence, as glancing round those low, dim walls, he contrasted them with the lofty halls of his father.

"Young man," said the hermit, seating Blanche by his side, and motioning to a seat, "sit down, and let us compose our excited feelings. We must think and speak calmly of all these things."

"Call me Clarence, father. Treat me not as a stranger, but as a son, for such would I be unto thee."

Father Angelo looked earnestly and sadly on the young man, and, as he beheld his fair and beaming countenance, he could not help his own spirit cleaving unto him, and his pity rose for the young and tender Blanche. He might banish the youth from his dwelling; but could he efface his image from her heart? He could bind her down to the rocky home which had so long sheltered her; but could he prevent her thoughts from roving to the world illumined by his presence? Shall he pierce, with a stroke more cruel than the sacrificial knife, that innocent bosom, and watch day after day the dark smoke of suffering rising above the altar, instead of the pure incense of prayer and of praise? He believed in an overruling Providence—a Providence that not only presides over the destinies of mighty empires, but directs the motion of the falling leaf. It could not have been chance which guided the boat of the stranger over the waters of the lake into an unknown stream, thus penetrating into the solitude which he had believed impervious. Perhaps she was created to serve her divine Master in the high places of the world, to be a beacon set upon a hill, to which the mariners of life might turn when about to be drifted on the shoals of temptation. God had, perchance, confided her to his care during her growing childhood, that a pure and holy being might be formed, whose example, placed before the daughters of fashion, would show them the loveliness of piety, and allure them to heaven. These thoughts rolled slowly through the mind of the hermit, like the sun struggling through a misty atmosphere, leaving a brightening track, though not dispersing the clouds.

With his zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of Blanche, he was conscious the leaven of selfishness was also mingled. For his own sake, he had likewise wrestled with the young man's spirit, for the child of his adoption was dear to him as the life-blood of his veins, and the thought of yielding her to another, far more terrible than death. In deep self-abasement, he acknowledged to himself his own weakness, and the deeper his humility, the greater his compassion, the stronger his sympathy.

"Young man—Clarence—my son," he cried, laying his

hand kindly on the shoulder of the youth, who thrilled with rapture at the benignant words—"let us make this a matter of solemn, earnest prayer. I am willing to submit it to an all-wise and all-controling Deity. Blanche is but a child, and you are only in the morning of manhood. You know nothing of each other, nothing of the melancholy despotism of Time, in crushing the buds of feeling under his iron heel. You love each other now, but you have only looked into each other's eyes, and seen the beauty of youth mirrored in their beams. The flame so suddenly enkindled may be extinguished by the breath of experience. Go back, my son, to the scenes you have quitted, and let time and absence test the strength of your new-born love. In the mean time, let Blanche commune with her own heart, in the holy shades which have embosomed her from infancy. Nature now blooms in the glory of summer; when the last leaves of autumn have fallen, and the breath of the dying season whispers of wisdom and disposes to meditation, you may come to us once more, and I will tell you the dealings of God with our souls."

"How long!" exclaimed Clarence, reproachfully.

"How long!" echoed the heart of Blanche.

"And then," cried Clarence, "may I claim her as my own? May I bring with me a man of God to perform the nuptial rite, or are you invested with sacerdotal power to consecrate our union?"

"I can make no promises for the future," replied the hermit, rising—and his majestic height seemed almost supernatural, so near it approached the low walls. "It is in vain that man builds the palace of hope, unless God's hand leads him in. The future! Who dares talk of the future? Who can measure its dim boundaries? Who can gather its unknown fruits? Who can tell whether its untrodden fields be golden with harvests or black with ruin? Not we, who stand upon the narrow isthmus of the *Present*, between the two great Illimitables."

The youthful Clarence felt oppressed by the grandeur of Father Angelo's sentiments, and found no words to reply. He longed for some communion with Blanche, but he hardly dared to gaze upon her in the presence of her awe-inspiring guardian. He felt that he must go; but he was not banished forever; he was permitted to return, and that

was an indulgence beyond his hopes, after his first stern greeting. He lingered, unwilling to depart without receiving from Blanche some pledge of faith, some token of love. Yet she was surrounded by such an unapproachable atmosphere of childlike innocence and saintly piety, it seemed sacrilege to address her in the language of earthly passion.

"I will go with you to the water's edge," said Father Angelo, "unless," he added, as if struck with a sudden recollection, "you will remain and sit down at our simple board. Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I freely offer unto thee."

Clarence gladly remained, though he could not partake of Naomi's neatly-served repast. The agitation of his mind silenced the demands of appetite. He only quaffed the water of the "crystal well," that refreshed, with its icy coolness, the lips burning with the repression of its glowing thoughts.

Blanche, who knew nothing of the art of ruling her emotions, sat by the side of Father Angelo, and, under the shadow of his lofty height, bent her dove-like eyes, in all their dewy softness, on the face which realized to her all she had ever dreamed of angels. She contrasted the bright darkness of his hair with the dim white of Father Angelo's; the soft, warm radiance of his eyes, that seemed to be sinking into *her* soul, with the deep, calm light of the hermit's, which appeared flashing into his own. Her cheek, usually uncolored, like the flower blooming in shade, ungilt by the sun, now emulated the tint in the heart of the wild rose.

"And now, my son," said Father Angelo, when they rose from the supper, which, to the mortification of the good Naomi, was left *almost* untouched, "I will speed you on the way—the night will be dark, and a few moments of lingering will add no joy to remembrance. You will come again, but you cannot bring the peace which reigned in this little cabin a few hours ago."

"Father, I will bring joy and love; and who could not exchange peace for these? Blanche," said he, turning irresolutely toward her—

"Come," said the hermit, "a simple farewell is all that need be uttered, and let God's blessing follow it."

"Farewell, Blanche," exclaimed Clarence, taking her hand and pressing it with fervor in both his own. The next moment he was following the steps of the hermit, and Blanche threw herself weeping into the arms of Naomi.

"Oh, my mother," she cried, "he has taken away my life with him, and left his own instead. Tell me, good Naomi, why does my heart throb so wildly, when it is not terror that I feel? and why do I weep so blindly, when I am more glad that he came than grieved that he has left me? Even now I am passing over all the flowers of summer, and thinking of the autumn's fading leaves."

"My dear child," said Naomi, tenderly smoothing her disordered tresses, "there is no shame in your tears, nor sin either. The Lord has surely sent this young man hither, and we must not oppose his blessed will. When good Father Angelo is taken away, and he cannot live forever, there would be nobody to keep away the wolves from the little lamb but poor old Naomi. You need not fear if you quit these rocks and woods that you will leave the great Lord behind you, for the Bible says, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and this is but one poor and narrow spot. Truly the young man is a goodly youth, and bears himself right nobly."

"Do not stop, my good Naomi," cried Blanche, caressing her affectionate foster-mother. "Your voice was never so pleasant to my ears. You said he was a goodly youth—go on. Think you the world contains one so good and fair?"

"Ah, my child," she replied, "the world is full of fair people, more of the fair than the good; but he might pass among them all."

"Are there any maidens in the world fairer than I am, Naomi?"

"How do you know that you are beautiful and fair?" asked Naomi, smiling at her simplicity.

"I have seen myself in your eyes and Father Angelo's; and to-night I looked upon myself in the eyes of Clarence, and I felt that I must be fair like himself. Does not love make every one beautiful?"

"It does to the one that loves."

From this time Blanche clung to Naomi with a tender-

ness greater than she had ever felt before. She was a woman, and could sympathize with her new and overpowering emotions. She was good and pious, but her piety was not so sublimated as Father Angelo's. She had withdrawn from the world, not because she had experienced treachery or sorrow, but because she loved her master, and resolved to share his secluded destiny. She had carried into solitude all her social feelings unchilled, her kindly charities still warm in her bosom. It seemed as if Providence had sent the young Blanche as an object on which her affections could overflow. She looked *up* to Father Angelo with a reverence so blended with humility, it could find expression only in acts of personal devotion. The love of the lowly in heart, like the watery element, seeks a level, and its current follows a downward course. She could look down upon the child committed to her care, for it was dependent and helpless, and her love could find utterance in words. The great want of her being was satisfied. Though in a subordinate situation, her sentiments were dignified and pure, and constant communion with such a spirit as Father Angelo's had given them a heavenly cast. She knew the history of his early life, but when he took possession of the hermitage of Rockrest, he had said to her—

"Naomi, the past is a grave; let silence forever rest upon it."

This silence she had never broken. Even to Blanche she had never violated the *spirit* of the injunction, or spoken of her master otherwise than as the world-abjuring saint. She had also religiously respected his purpose of keeping Blanche perfectly secluded from the world; but now when, in spite of their vigilance, human love had rivalled the divine in her heart, she could not help rejoicing in the hope that this flower of beauty would be transplanted to a warmer soil and a brighter atmosphere.

CHAPTER III.

THE flowers of summer had faded, the leaves of autumn fallen, and paved the margin of the stream with their pallid gold. Clarence came, and Father Angelo, bowing to what he believed the decree of a higher power, no longer opposed his union with Blanche, and he promised that when the buds of spring unfolded, she should be given to his arms. In vain Clarence pleaded; the hermit was inflexible.

"She is too young," he answered. "Would you lure the bird from its parent nest before its tender wings can unfurl? My mission is not yet ended. Her guardian angel is still waiting here."

The winters of that mild latitude are short, and the verdure and foliage of spring ere long beautified the soil.

Naomi was troubled about the bridal robes of her foster-child; but the hermit reminded her of Martha, who was careful and troubled about many things, and therefore rebuked by her Lord.

"Let her be adorned with the same virgin simplicity as she now is," said Father Angelo; "with no ornament but her unshorn locks, the crowning glory of womanhood. As a daughter of Zion she shall leave me, though as such I fear she will never return."

The day appointed for the nuptials was balmy and serene. No pompous retinue was to attend the youthful bridegroom. He was to come, accompanied only by the man of God. As he was to bear his bride over the stream which he was the first to navigate, he had fitted up a splendid barge, with silken hangings, and christened it the *Arctic Dove*. The name appeared in golden characters on the boat, and, fluttering above it, the winged missionary of the deluge, bearing in its beak the bloomy olive.

It was the wish of Father Angelo that they should be united under the old oak, the hermit of the stream, beneath the canopy of heaven, in a temple not made with hands. Thus the nuptials became grand and solemn. The same waves that received the drowning sigh of the

mother heard the nuptial vows of the child, and the same hands which had drawn from its watery grave the stiffened form of the one were now raised in benediction over the plighted vows of the other.

Blanche knelt at the feet of Father Angelo, the wedded wife of Clarence. And now that the hour of parting was come, and she was to be borne from the guardian arms which had so tenderly cherished her, the mighty debt she owed him pressed upon her a weight of gratitude too heavy to be borne. All the love she bore to Clarence, all the brilliancy of the prospects opening to her view, could not reconcile her to the separation. To leave him in loneliness and age seemed cruel and ungrateful; to leave him when she was just becoming old enough to repay his cares, and to gild the shadows of his departing days with the deepening brightness of her own!

"Bless me, my father," she cried, folding her arms around his knees, and looking up in his face through showering tears. "And oh! forgive that I have loved better the face of the stranger than the one on which I have gazed so long. Pray for me, my father, pray for me, as I float out into that unknown world whose dangers I am going to brave. If sickness fall upon you, or death come near, I will return on wings to your bosom, to soothe your sufferings and minister to your wants."

Father Angelo raised her from the earth, and held her a moment in a silent embrace. His face was deadly pale, and tears trembled on his silver lashes. Then releasing one arm, and lifting the hand toward heaven, he exclaimed—

"The blessing of a triune God rest upon you forever and ever, thou child of my prayers and darling of my hopes! Let no thought of me sadden your joys, or darken your future home. But if sorrow and disappointment be your lot, should the storm arise and the lightnings flash, remember the haven of Rockrest, where your frail bark may again be sheltered; remember these aged arms that are ever open to enfold you."

"And thou too, my son!" added he, turning to Clarence, and blessing him after the manner of the patriarchs of old. "But if ever the vows you have breathed this day be forgotten or broken, either through falsehood,

neglect, or desertion, the blessing will turn to an undying curse, and burn into your soul with unquenchable fire."

"Father, I will never forfeit your blessing," exclaimed Clarence, impetuously. "I swear"—

"Swear not, my son, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool. And now farewell, my dear children. May He who hung his rainbow over the undeluged world, as a token of His covenant mercy, preserve you both from the temptations of your own hearts, in the midst of an ungodly world!"

Then, separating Blanche forcibly from the weeping Naomi, he waved his hand toward the barge. A few moments after, Blanche found herself seated by the side of Clarence, encircled in his arms, and her head drooping almost unconsciously on his breast. She was gliding slowly, gently along, to the music of the dipping oars, while the silken awning rustled with the breeze, and the water dimpled and sparkled in the sun. As the boat gradually receded from the wild home of her childhood, she could still see the tall figure of Father Angelo leaning, as it were, on the blue of heaven, like one of those time-gray ruins rising in hoary magnificence amid the gloom of antiquity.

And now, behold Blanche, the child of solitude and prayer, the inhabitant of that world which had always seemed to her at such an immeasurable distance!

One whose blind-born eyes are suddenly opened to the visible glories of creation could hardly be more dazzled and bewildered than Blanche. She had never dreamed of the existence of the splendor that surrounded her, and it was long before she could be convinced it was a reality. It was still longer before she could fashion herself to the manners and customs of the beings with whom she was associated. She was a wild forest-flower imbedded in diamonds. At first, their glitter seemed cold to the sunbeams that had warmed her rock-sheltered home. There was no warmth, no life, when Clarence was not near. In his absence, each moment of time was a drop of lead falling, heavy and dull; in his presence, a golden sand gliding too swiftly away. Never perhaps did human love arise to such wild idolatry, or manifest itself with such fervor and strength. And the love of Clarence was

equally enthusiastic and intense, but accustomed to that repression of feeling which custom requires. In society, he chastened its ardor and withheld its expression. Dearly as he loved her, he feared the ridicule of the world, and often blushed at the smile her adorning looks and clinging devotion elicited from those around them. Her artless exclamations of wonder and delight, the soft wildness of her eyes, that paused to rest on any object that charmed them, whether animate or inanimate, the childish and free grace of her attitudes, the simplicity and holiness of her language, and the angelic loveliness of her person, made her the theme of universal curiosity, interest and admiration. When told she was beautiful, she did not deny the praise, and accuse the one who addressed her of flattery.

"Yes, I know that I am fair," she simply replied; "but God made me so. You should praise Him, not me."

One evening, when she appeared decorated with diamonds, the gifts of Clarence, she gazed earnestly at the bracelets that glittered on her arm.

"Of what are you thinking, sweet Blanche?" asked Clarence, observing the fixedness of her gaze.

"I was thinking," she answered, with a smile, followed by a sigh, "that these would melt away in the blaze of light. I have seen the flowers sparkling with dew-drops, and, when the morning sun shone on them, the dew-drops vanished. I feel like one of those flowers shining with gems, and I am looking to see them fade away."

It was long before Clarence could induce her to quit his arm in society, and accept the protection of another. He told her the world had claims upon them, that they would be thought selfish and exclusive, that they must sometimes separate and endeavor to contribute to the happiness and enjoyment of others. There was a friend of Clarence, the same who had accompanied him in the boat when he first beheld the young recluse, who was always near them, and whom Blanche preferred to the strangers who solicited her regard. His name was Julian, and there was something very charming in the sportive grace of his manner, and in the animation and brightness of his countenance. He delighted in calling forth the original

and guileless remarks of Blanche, and in observing the changes of her soft, gazelle-like eyes.

"I wonder I had forgotten you," she said, when he had been dwelling on the moment when he and Clarence first beheld her reclining on the bank, and imagined her some stray child of Paradise. "Now, when I look upon you, I see you are almost as beautiful as Clarence. I thought he must be different from the sons of men. Indeed, I believed him an angel. Now, it seems to me, there are many angels, though none so fair as he."

The cheek of the young man flushed with pleasure at this openly avowed admiration, but such was the heavenly innocence of the speaker, he dared not exhibit the delight he felt.

"Why did Father Angelo tell me there was so much sin in the world?" she asked. "Sin is such a dark and dreadful thing, it must throw a shadow on all around it. Everything I see looks bright and beautiful; every face wears a smile. If there were sin, there would be sorrow. And yet," added she, looking thoughtfully upward, "I hear no one speak of God. I fear they do not remember Him. I hear no prayers ascending round me, no incense of praise going up. At home He was in all our thoughts. His name forever on our lips. Why are all silent here?"

"In the world the deepest thoughts of the heart are not spoken. We think the name of God too holy to be breathed in a promiscuous crowd. We worship Him in the great churches, and pray to Him in the solitude of our closets."

"Father Angelo says life should be one long prayer, and every breath we draw one of thanksgiving and praise. Oh! it was far easier to think of God near that lone rock in the presence of good Father Angelo, who always had heaven in his heart, than in this bright and beautiful world. It is sweet to live here, but I would pray to die there."

This spotless simplicity, this pure heavenly-mindedness, could not be kept perfectly uncontaminated in the worldly atmosphere she now breathed. The deep and ardent concentration of her thoughts on Clarence became gradually diffused on surrounding objects. She loved him still, but she was no longer sad and miserable when he

left her side. She saw him now among the young and noble of his sex, and he no longer shone in radiant superiority, as when his blooming youth was contrasted with the hoary age of Father Angelo. He had tried to teach her to repress her love, and to wean her from her too clinging trust in him, before the eyes of others, and, in obeying his will, she learned to listen with pleasure to the language of admiration, and to blush and smile at her own loveliness. The images of the lonely hermitage, of the venerable Father Angelo, and the affectionate Naomi, grew more faint and distant, and a dim haze floated over the clear heaven of her faith.

Clarence, who at first beheld with pride and delight the admiration she inspired, and whose only fear was that she should love him too well before the eyes of the world, began to tremble lest his instructions should be too faithfully obeyed. He saw those eyes, which had hung upon him with such fond idolatry, wander to meet the beaming glances of others, and the excitement of gratified vanity brighten with unhealthy radiance the vestal roses of her cheek. A vague, painful, but unacknowledged jealousy stole gradually into his heart. He began to watch her, and to look upon her with a clouded brow, while she, meeting less sunshine in his eyes, sought more earnestly for it in the eyes of others. Like twilight shadows imperceptibly commencing, yet slowly, certainly deepening into the gloom of night, the light cloud spread and darkened, and they sat within its shade, and felt a chillness creeping over them, yet never said to each other, "Are not our hearts growing cold? And why does the household warmth depart?"

It was strange that Blanche, in the singleness and simplicity of her nature, did not ask Clarence the cause of his estrangement. But, while her thoughts seemed transparent as glass in all things else, they were opaque on this. Perhaps an instinctive feeling of wrong within herself, an innate sense of having lost something of her original holiness of spirit, a consciousness that her wild, idolatrous love was assuming a character so comparatively calm as by contrast to appear to her indifference, made her dread an explanation of his altered manner. Perhaps, too, a dread that his love was fading, and that the

dark prophecies of Father Angelo were about to be fulfilled, more than all contributed to this strange reserve. Then the pride and delicacy inherent in the bosom of woman closed her lips to the utterance of complaint. As yet no word had been spoken with ungentle tongue, no sentiment expressed that breathed of harshness; but there was a mutual conviction that something had come between their hearts, something cold and foreign; but this was expressed only by the averted eye and the changing cheek. But the smouldering fire soon found vent, and arrowy words, winged by passion, fastened in the heart.

One evening Blanche remained at home, and suffered Clarence to go to some scene of pleasure without her companionship. She felt as if she would be happier alone than by his side, with the growing fear that his heart was wandering from her. And now the novelty, the intoxication of her feelings had subsided; now she was accustomed to the incense that everywhere greeted her, it was losing its power to charm. She was beginning to feel desolate and oppressed. She remembered the Eden morning of her love, and sighed at the retrospect. She had tasted of the tree of experience, and found its fruits bitter to the taste. She recalled the sweet tranquillity of her life when, embosomed in the shades of the hermitage, her days glided on unruffled by passion or fear, and wondered why love must begin in rapture and end in sorrow. She had said to Clarence she would rather remain alone; and yet, when he turned away without urging her to accompany him, she felt regret and disappointment. His dark eye rested upon her for a moment with a peculiar expression.

"Is it, indeed, alone that you wish to be, Blanche?" asked he; "or is it not rather that you are weary of being with me?"

"Weary, oh no!" she replied. "But I am weary of being abroad. I am tired of trying to be like other people, and of forgetting what I am myself. Indeed, I sometimes think I am not myself; that the Blanche of Rockrest is no more, and a strange, cold, unnatural being come in her stead."

"Do you indeed feel so?" said her husband, approaching her with a lighted countenance. "Then do not try to

banish her. Be still the Blanche whom I first knew, and attempt not to imitate the follies you condemn and despise."

Blanche lifted up to him her dove-like eyes, with a look of gentle reproach, though a feeling of self-blame again bowed them down.

"It was to please you," she cried, "that I have endeavored to be like others. I have learned to hide my soul and to seal my lips when I felt my heart gushing too freely; and I have tried to laugh when I was not merry, and seem delighted when I am sad; and yet—and yet"—she added, with a sigh—"it seems as if I had lost all my own, and gained nothing from others. Oh, Clarence, I often wish for the wings of a dove, that I might fly back to the peaceful shades of Rockrest!"

"Fold your wings on my heart, my gentle dove," exclaimed Clarence, drawing her to his bosom with the passionate tenderness which jealousy had vailed, but not extinguished. "Your home is here. Forgive me all coldness and estrangement. Forgive me if I have been a faithless guardian of too dear a treasure. I feared the world was become my rival; that the voice of admiration was sweeter to your ear than the accents of my love. I see, I feel that I have wronged you. The whiteness of your spirit is unstained. It was the shadow of my own that darkened."

Blanche, who felt as if a cold avalanche had suddenly fallen from her heart, clung to his bosom, which she deluged with her long-repressed tears. All wildly as she wept, she had never felt so deep a happiness. A feeling of blissful security from some mysterious, impending danger settled like the lull of the tempest on the storm-lashed billows.

"Oh, do not leave me!" she cried, when at last he rose to depart. "I feel as if my guardian angel were forsaking me."

"Then why not go with me?"

"I cannot go out of myself to-night. My thoughts are too precious; they make me too happy. There would be tears in my eyes which others would see, and think me sad, while the bright smiles in my heart would be too deep for show."

And thus, in love and trust, they parted; he to fulfill an engagement with a friend, who had promised to meet him at the gay gathering—she to meditate on the fullness of her reborn joy and content.

"I will soon return," said he, looking back upon her, with one of those lambent smiles which always played like summer lightning on her soul.

Where were the arrowy words, which, winged by the hand of passion, were destined to hang quivering in memory's core till it festered and bled, making an irremediable wound? They were not yet formed in the red hot forge of jealousy, that furnace where sevenfold heat is always burning.

Blanche remained in a kind of ecstatic reverie, wondering if she were not in a dream, closing her eyes to shut in her blissful thoughts, then opening them and looking softly, tremblingly around, as if to see if there were no shadows lingering near, ready to roll back on the morning brightness of her happiness.

With a sudden impulse, she slided from the sofa on which she was seated, and, reclining on the carpet in the same careless, childish, graceful manner she used to do under the old oak tree, threw her arms across a low footstool, and leaned upon them her warm and roseate cheek. Excitement had subsided into depth and quiescence; the stillness of the apartment fell slumberously upon her, and the lids so lately moist with tears, gradually closed under their dewy weight. She was a child again, and dreamed she was on the margin of the stream that had been the mirror of her childhood, and that she saw the snowy locks and august figure of Father Angelo reflected from its glassy surface. His voice murmured in her ear, and glided like a deep rill into the fountain of her feelings. She smiled, and stretched out her arms in sleep, and the movement partially awakened her. Again the voice murmured in her ear, and her slumbers melted away. Starting, and raising herself on one elbow, while she pushed back the loosened ringlets from her brow, she beheld a figure kneeling at her side, far different from Father Angelo's, for it was adorned with all the graces of youth.

"Julian!" she exclaimed, passing her hand over her

eyes, as if to clear away the mists of vision, "Julian, is it you?"

Julian had those sportive manners which made it impossible for the most ultra devotee of formality to preserve the stiffness of ceremony in the atmosphere which he breathed. Blanche had always admired him next to Clarence; and wherever she went, if left by Clarence to the guardianship of comparative strangers, she felt a glow of delight at his approach she was too artless to conceal. While he, satiated with the artificial sweets of society, turned to her pure and sparkling simplicity for refreshment and repose. Lately, she had observed that the cloud on the brow of Clarence grew darker when Julian was near her. Sometimes the warm smile which Julian's gay sallies called to her lips was suddenly frozen there, by a glance from the darkening eye of Clarence, meeting her suddenly through an opening in the crowd, and she felt for the moment sick and wretched, and dreading she knew not what. The crowd would close together, the dark cloud vanish, the sparkles of wit and gayety again coruscate, and the sweet smile that had been hiding in roses came timidly forth from its glowing ambush to illuminate her face.

Now, surprised in the act of sleep, in which, though there was no guilt, there was innocent shame, she laughed and blushed at his attitude of mock reverence—laughed all the more readily for the tears which she had previously shed. She thought not of changing her partially recumbent position; for she had been dreaming that the old oak boughs were rustling above her and the grassy carpet of Rockrest beneath her, and the illusion was not yet dispelled.

"You look now as you did when I first beheld you," cried Julian. "I never shall forget that moment."

"Nor I either," answered Blanche, thinking of Clarence, and a faint sigh died on her lips. "But why are you here?" she added. "I thought you were with Clarence."

"I left him in the festive throng," he replied. "But the scene had no charm for me, since you were absent. I stole away unperceived, and, being ushered into this apart-

ment, became for a little while the guardian of your slumbers."

All at once, Blanche remembered the cloud she had so often seen on the brow of Clarence when the voice of Julian was in her ear, and she made a movement to rise; but the door was thrown open simultaneously, and Clarence entered, with a dark fire burning in his eyes, to which the glances yet trembling in her memory were summer sunbeams.

His sudden entrance, stormy countenance, and defiant air, struck Blanche with such terror that her limbs were paralyzed. She attempted to rise, but powerless as the bow whose string has snapped asunder, leaned against the side of the sofa, with joined hands and pallid cheeks. Julian rose, and, while his face reddened and his brow contracted, he returned the haughty glance of Clarence with an eye fierce and unquailing.

"And it was for this you refused to accompany me?" exclaimed Clarence, every consideration consumed in the blaze of passion. "It was for this you cheated me into the conviction that you were as innocent as the dove for whose wings you were sighing. And I, fool that I was—I believed your false words, and, on the faith of your Judas kisses, warmed you once more in my heart of hearts. Oh, thou specious dissembler, thou mayst well tremble, for the hour of retribution is at hand!"

As he thus gave vent to his stormy emotions, under the excitement of the most maddening jealousy, Blanche rose upon her feet with the rebound of the sapling after the sweep of the whirlwind. It was the first time words of anger had ever been addressed to her. Naomi's voice always softened into tenderness, and Father Angelo's into love, whenever directed to their foster-child. At first, in trembling terror, she listened to her husband's wrathful denunciations; but, as he went on, the great law of self-preservation, implanted as a bulwark to aggression in the human breast, resisted his dark charges. She felt she was wronged, grievously wronged, and the cry of outraged innocence rung in her bosom. She, who had always been as gentle as the unweaned lamb, tender as the brooding dove, now stood like the forest empress, confronted in her lonely lair. Those fierce and deadly passions inherent in

our nature, which had slumbered from her birth, and of whose existence she was unconscious, were now wakened and writhing within her with the coil of the serpent and the sting of the adder. She was of deadly pallor, for it was the incandescence, not the flame of passion that was burning in her inmost being. Her eyes glittered with a metallic gleam, and the soft curl of her lip was lost in the quiver of disdain. Was this Father Angelo's Heaven-dedicated child, the angel of Rockrest? Alas! the blood-hounds were let loose upon her, and the hunted deer turned upon its pursuer for a life-struggle.

"Clarence," cried Julian, his sportive accents changed to stern resolution, "recall your rash words. My coming was accidental. Using the freedom of a privileged guest, I entered unannounced, and found her sleeping like a wearied child"——

"And knelt to awaken her!" interrupted Clarence, with withering contempt. "Away with this falsehood! Take that, perfidious friend!" he cried, dashing his glove at his feet. "Take it and begone! You know on what terms we meet again."

Julian raised the glove and put it in his bosom, then, turning to Clarence, said—

"It is well. You and I understand each other; but for her, if you do not take back every aspersion cast upon her spotless innocence, all eternity will be too short for the gnawings of remorse and the burnings of despair. Humble yourself in the dust before her, or you deserve to lose her forever."

"She *is* lost to me forever!" exclaimed Clarence, with such bitter anguish, that Blanche was about to spring to his side, when his look deterred her.

"Blanche, retire to your room," said he, in a low, husky voice; "I have business to transact which makes your absence urgent."

"Unkind Clarence! misguided, cruel husband!" she cried, the glittering spark going out in her eyes, and a thick haze gathering over them. "What is it you are about to do? Oh, think of Father Angelo! Think of the white locks of age! Remember his parting words!"

"My memory has kept pace with yours," he answered. "Be assured, I have forgotten nothing. Blanche, I re-

quire your obedience. Once more, I command you to retire!"

Slowly and mechanically she turned away, left the room, ascended the marble stairs, feeling as if she were changing into black marble herself, like the doomed Arabian king, entered her chamber, and sat down on a low couch by an open window. There she sat motionless as a statue, the cool evening air flowing in with dewy chillness on her fevered temples. She heard the sound of shutting doors and retreating footsteps below, then a stillness like the grave succeeded. Blanche sat thus for hours, then sank back upon the couch, while the rising wind blew in midnight blasts on her damp tresses and uncovered arms. She did not sleep, but she felt not the wind; she knew not that the clouds of night enveloped her. She was not conscious when its darkness faded into the gray of the morning. The chambermaid, on opening the door to awaken her, recoiled at the sight of her cold white face, and fixed mournful eyes. She spoke to her, but received no answer. She drew near, and respectfully touched the pale hand that hung passively over the couch; it thrilled through her like ice. Alarmed, she rang the bell and summoned the household; *but the master was not there!*

A physician was called; but the skill of medicine seemed unavailing with one who appeared transformed to stone. While he was trying in vain to force the congealed blood from her veins, whose delicate blue could no longer be traced on the snowy surface beneath which they meandered, Clarence rushed into the chamber, with wild countenance and disordered hair, exclaiming—

"Blanche, I am a wretch! He is dead! Julian is dead! He fell by this accursed hand! Ha! is she dead, too?" he cried, in a low, shuddering tone. "Have I killed her, too?"

"No, no," said the physician, waving him back with one hand; "disturb her not, or she may be a victim yet. I warn you to fly, young man, ere it be too late. I understand all the dark transaction. I will watch over *her*."

Clarence stood one moment, as if transfixed; then throwing himself by the couch, on which Blanche reclined, he clasped her to his bosom in a passion of grief and

remorse, kissed her brow, cheeks, and lips again and again, then, kneeling by her, lifted his hands and eyes to Heaven, as if supplicating for mercy and forgiveness.

"Clarence," cried the friend who awaited him at the door, "come; for it is death to linger."

Finding the unhappy young man obeyed not his reiterated call, he entered, and, throwing one arm around him, with mingled tenderness and authority, bore him from the spot, with his bosom saturated with blood. The frozen stream in the veins of Blanche thawed in that embrace of agony, and, gushing from her bandaged arm, left a dark red stain on the breast of the unhappy fugitive. It was but too true that Julian had taken up the gauntlet which Clarence, in jealous madness, had thrown down, the duellists had met, and the gay and handsome Julian fell by the hand of his too late repenting friend. Reason returned at the sight of his flowing blood; and when, in an agony of remorse, he cast himself on the ground at his side, denouncing himself as a murderer, the expiring Julian asserted, with his last breath, the angelic innocence of Blanche, deploring his own thoughtlessness and imprudence.

And thus Clarence fled, with blood upon his hands and blood upon his bosom, with despair in his soul, and the invisible Avenger of blood behind him.

CHAPTER IV.

It was months after the events recorded in the last chapter, that the scene we are about to describe was unfolded in the life-dream of the young Blanche.

She was sitting on a low couch, supported by pillows, whose white linen covering could scarcely be distinguished from her pale and bloodless complexion. Her eyes, mournfully riveted on the sky seen through the parted curtains, had a still, frozen look, and so immovable was her attitude, that the long loose locks that floated over her bosom

stirred not with the breeze of life that seemed lulled in her breast.

The door opened, and a stranger entered. He was a tall dark man, whose face seemed bronzed with the burning sun of a tropical clime. She turned her eyes toward him, but no ray of interest or curiosity lighted up the frozen calm of their surface.

"Think me not an intruder," said he, gently approaching her. "When you learn the motives that bring me here, I trust I shall be forgiven."

He took a seat near her, and gazed upon her long and earnestly: gazed till his sad dark eyes were blinded by tears.

"You are the adopted daughter of Father Angelo," he cried, "the pious hermit of Rockrest."

At that beloved and revered name, so long a stranger to her ears, she started and trembled. Her bosom heaved faintly and heavily, as if under an icy weight, and she pressed her white hand upon it, pained by its awakening life.

"Blanche," exclaimed he, in increasing agitation, "for such I am told is the name you bear, you see before you an unhappy wanderer in search of a long-lost treasure. For years on years I have sought in vain for some traces of an adored wife from whom I was separated in early youth. I heard your history, and something told me that I might discover the child of my lost Adella in you. Your lineaments and features are hers. My heart throbs wildly with its new-born hopes. Speak, and tell me your mother's name."

"I know not," answered Blanche, shrinking nervously from the agitated stranger. She dreaded the approach of mankind, and no instinct of nature drew her toward this unknown and darkbrowed being. If such dread and destructive elements slumbered in the bosom of the young and handsome Clarence, what terrible passions might not dwell beneath an exterior bronzed and withered by the intensity of an equatorial sun!

"Have you no relic of her?" cried the stranger, in a voice of passionate entreaty; "nothing that will confirm the wild-born hopes, which grow stronger as I gaze upon you? Your voice—your eyes! My God, it must be so."

"I have a letter," replied Blanche, now effectually roused from the torpor of despair, and rising from her couch with a strength she was not conscious of possessing, she opened a small cabinet near the couch, and, unclosing a pocket-book, drew forth a paper. It looked worn and faded; and in the folds the writing was scarcely legible.

"It is hers. I should know the characters amidst ten thousand scrolls," exclaimed the stranger. "Blanche, my daughter—my child—child of my poor lost Adella!" He caught her in his arms, pressed her to his bosom, and she felt his hot tears scalding her cheek.

Terrified and bewildered, Blanche struggled a moment in the close embrace.

"Oh! let me go," she cried; "you know not what I have suffered. My heart is broken—you *hurt it*. You crush it, and make it bleed afresh. You deserted my mother, even as I am deserted. You drove her to a death of violence. Oh! let me go. You are a man, and must be cruel. I fear you—I dread you."

Her white and quivering lips suddenly closed, and she fell back fainting on his breast. When the attendants entered, summoned by the violent ringing of the bell, they were astonished and alarmed at seeing their mistress lying insensible in the arms of a stranger, whose dark and foreign aspect inspired them with distrust and awe. When Blanche came back to life, and saw him who called himself her father kneeling by her side, with a countenance of such ardent feeling and intense axiety, she felt a sudden revulsion of sentiment toward him, a strange, unaccountable reaction. The cold weight that had benumbed her seemed melting, and sensibility resumed its sway. She was like the drowned person resuscitated. Every nerve was quivering and instinct with anguish. A full consciousness of the horror, the desolateness of her lot, a sudden horrible remembrance of the murdered Julian, the fugitive Clarence, the kneeling figure of the former, the withering accusations of the latter—all the events of the last few months swept instantaneously across her mental vision. The thought of a protector, a father, a friend—one who could bear her back to the arms of Father Angelo, to the shelter of Rockrest—rose all at once, like the breaking of dawn after a starless night. Could he look with such love on

her if he really had heartlessly deserted her mother? Had he not said he had been a wanderer years on years in search of his lost treasure? Clarence too was a wanderer on the face of the earth, with the brand of blood on his soul. Must she not pity the wanderer? Could she repulse her own father? Would not God forsake her in his wrath if she broke one of the canons His own finger had written?

"Father," she cried, turning and laying her head confidingly on his shoulder, "forgive me—my reason has been drowned in unshed tears."

The tears so long locked in frozen apathy here burst forth, and she wept till her very being seemed dissolved—wept, like an infant, on the bosom from which she had so lately recoiled.

Rheinthus, for such was the name of the stranger, told her the history of his life, which we will condense in few words. It was a tale of love and sorrow; of parental harshness, filial disobedience, passionate struggles for independence, resulting in wealth which, finding none to share with him, hung upon him a curse instead of a blessing. He was the only son of opulent parents, and he loved a lovely but indigent girl, whom he clandestinely wedded. Soon after the marriage, he was urged by a rich uncle to go to India, where an opportunity offered of making a splendid fortune. Eagerly accepting a proposition which promised him independence and release from parental despotism, he left his young and unacknowledged bride, in the hope of a speedy return. This was retarded by the lingering illness and death of his uncle, who left him the heir of his immense wealth. She, a wife, without the protection of a husband's name, became a mother, and, discarded by her own parents, in the extremity of her despair clasped her infant in her arms, and sought the princely mansion of his father. From his door she was rudely driven, and, believing herself forsaken by him she loved, from his protracted absence, which had long since awakened the most agonizing doubts and fears, she wandered without any haven in view, till she heard of Father Angelo's world-secluded home, and resolved to commit her infant to *his* guardianship, while she herself plunged uncalled into the abyss of eternity.

The husband returned, wealthy beyond his most sanguine hopes, to hear that his wife and child had been turned pitilessly from his own father's door, to search for them with unavailing efforts, and at last to resign himself to the hopelessness of his despair. From clime to clime he dragged his heavy and weary heart. About the time of the death of Julian and the flight of Clarence, he paused in his travels in the town where Blanche resided. The hundred tongues of rumor were busy with the history of her life, and the widowed, childless Rheinthus felt a conviction, almost amounting to certainty, that the foundling of Rockrest and this lost daughter were one. Days, weeks, and even months glided by before Blanche was allowed to leave the chamber she had sought with the arrowy words of Clarence quivering in her heart. At length, he obtained admittance, and the result has been told.

A few weeks after the restoration of Blanche to her father, the Arctic dove was seen winging its way over the blue waters that laved the shore of the hermitage. The gray and moss-crowned rock, the aged oak, the green solitude of the young oaken thicket—all remained unchanged; but in herself—what a mighty transformation was wrought! She had gone forth a guileless, saintly, blessed child; she returned a heart-crushed, smitten, blighted woman. She went forth a scarce unfolded flower, sparkling with the dews of the morning; she came back a faded blossom, bearing a dark spot on its petals, that told of the gnawings of the canker-worm in their folds.

Leaning back in her father's arms, she fixed her eyes on the hoary summit of the rock, on which a white fleece of summer clouds was softly resting, and it seemed to her that she could see the wings of her guardian angel there, turning their silvery plumage to the light.

"Oh! my forsaken God," she cried, in the depths of her soul, "I return to thy altar. I bring thee a wounded and bleeding, a broken and contrite spirit. O God, reject it not!"

When she stepped upon the grassy bank, from whose gentle slope she could see the low walls of the hermitage, a cold dew gathered on her temples. What if Father Angelo were dead! She looked in vain for a glimpse of

his gray-robed and ancestral form. He was wont to walk abroad in that hour to worship God in a "temple not made with hands." In silence she led the way to the cabin, sighing as the long grass rustled around her, thinking it whispered of graves. She stood in the entrance of the cabin, and an irrepressible cry escaped her lips. Extended on a couch near the open window, through which he could gaze through the "golden vistas" of sunset into an inner heaven, lay that beloved and revered form she remembered in undecaying grandeur and time-defying strength. His locks could not be whiter than they were when she last saw them gilt with sunbeams, representing in his towering height and snow-crowned brow the Mont Blanc of his race; but now they fell lifelessly over his sunken temples, their silver lustre dim and defaced. At the sound of that thrilling cry, he turned his eye toward the door, and beheld the pallid and altered countenance of his adopted child.

"My Blanche, my child, my darling, my lamb!" he exclaimed, extending his arms from the bed, and leaning feebly forward.

"Oh, my father," she cried, springing into his embrace, and pillowing her head on his bosom, "you told me, if the storm arose and the lightning flashed, I should find shelter again in these beloved arms. Hide me, hide me forever in their sacred fold."

"And is it even so, my child?" said the aged saint, passing his hand fondly over the bright locks, that fell sweeping over his breast. "Dost thou come like the returning prodigal, weary of the husks of earthly pleasure, and hungering for the unleavened bread of our Heavenly Father's board?"

"Peace, peace, O father! I pray but for peace. Hope and joy are dead. All I ask is rest, rest from the strife of human passions."

"Peace dwelleth with God; "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High," cried the hermit, looking reverently upward. "Peace," he added, "was the last legacy of our adorable Redeemer to his mourning disciples. The soul that remains true to its divine espousals basks in eternal sunshine. The clouds roll far below. Oh, my Blanche, would that these dying arms could bear

thee even now to the footstool of eternal Peace! But who is this?" cried he, observing, for the first time, the stately form of Rheinthus, who stood near the door, unwilling to intrude on the first moments of a meeting so sad.

"It is my father," answered Blanche, rising, and taking the hand of Rheinthus, and leading him to the bedside. "He never forsook my mother. He has sought her sorrowing through the world. He has come to weep over her grave."

"Then you will not be left comfortless and unprotected. God be praised! But Clarence, my daughter—"

"Spare me now, father. To-morrow I will tell all."

Naomi, who had gone to the spring for water, entered at this moment, and wept for joy at beholding her darling once more, and then wept for grief at the sight of her wilted bloom.

Blanche dared not ask Father Angelo why he was lying so pale and apparently helpless there. As it seemed to her that he had never known youth, so it appeared that he could never experience decay. He seemed too grand, too strong, too much like her idea of the Deity to die. She had never looked on death in the human form; but she had seen the wounded bird fall quivering to the ground, then stiffen and remain pulseless and still. She had seen the flowers of summer and the leaves of autumn wither and turn to shriveled scrolls; and she had seen also the tree of the forest scathed by lightning, and fall, a blasted corpse, in the midst of the green woods. Father Angelo's enfeebled and prostrate form reminded her of those ruins of nature, and she felt a conviction that he too was passing away. He had taught her to look upon death as the birth of eternal life, upon the grave as a bed whose curtains were the skies, whose pillow the bosom of the Saviour. But she knew that death was still and cold, and the grave dark and cold, and there was mystery and awe in the thought.

Father Angelo knew that, like the patriarchs of old, he was about to sleep with his fathers. He had but one wish on earth, and that was to see the child of his adoption before he departed hence and was seen no more. No disease racked his frame or enfeebled the glorious strength of his intellect. He had reached the goal of life, not a

jaded traveler panting with the heat and burden of the day, but a girded pilgrim, rejoicing in the prospect of calm repose.

Rheinthus either lingered by the grave of his wife, or wandered on the banks of the stream, whose melancholy gurglings seemed still to tell of her sad doom, while Blanche clung to the side of him from whom she knew she was soon to be separated. All her early feelings of devotion rekindled in this holy and intimate communion. The spark from heaven once more descended on the altar of her heart, and the smoke and flame of the sacrifice went up from its ruined shrine.

As Father Angelo drew near his last hour, he seemed to have glimpses of futurity flashing with glory on his soul. Like Moses on the heights of Nebo, he beheld the green fields and sunlit waters of the promised land. As the twilight shadow of death, cold and gray, came stealing over him, a supernatural lustre lighted up his eyes, and illumined the gathering darkness.

"The bridge is sinking," he cried, and his voice, though low, was clear and unbroken. "One by one the frail planks are giving way. The waters are rising between, higher and higher. They are roaring behind, dark and unfathomable. They are rolling before, in all the depth and grandeur of a coming eternity. But the Son of God is walking on the billows, and they fall slumberously away into a smooth sea of burning glass."

Sometimes the language of Scripture came rushing to his memory with the fervor of inspiration.

"And I looked," said he, lifting his prophetic eyes to heaven," and beheld a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. Come, thou reaping angel—the clusters are hanging heavy on the vine. The grapes are ready for the wine-press. Come, in dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of thy strength. Thou who bearest the unutterable name, wrap me in the blood-stained folds of thy mantle, and I shall be made whiter than snow."

Blanche listened in speechless awe while he thus communed with his Saviour and his God She dared not interrupt this sublime communion. She hardly dared to

breatne lest she should disturb the celestial aspirations of his departing spirit. But she yearned for some token of love from the dying saint. Like Elisha, gazing after the chariot wheels of fire that bore away the ascending prophet, she waited for the backward look of the heart, retarding for one moment the upward flight of the soul.

"Father," she softly exclaimed, during a solemn pause, "will you not bless me ere you depart? Have you not one blessing even for me, oh my father?"

Laying one cold hand slowly on her head, and feebly raising the other to heaven—

"I bless thee, my child, my once heaven-dedicated child —and thou wilt be blessed. Remain not here when I am gone. Go with thy earthly father, and be to him all thou hast been to me. Walk in *white* garments, and keep them pure and unspotted from the world. Walk in *white*—an angel of mercy and purity, a daughter of charity, a child of grace. Should thine erring and unfortunate husband be again restored to thee, remember, unless he who turned to crimson the water at Cana shall be present at the reunion, the day will come when, instead of the winecup, there shall be blood, and for the wedding-garment, sackcloth and ashes."

At last his eyes gently closed, and an expression of ineffable placidity settled on his pallid lips.

Blanche, who had never looked on death, knew, by the awful stillness of repose, that it was there; but she felt no terror—even grief it seemed sacrilege to feel. Her father led her from the room, leaving the faithful Naomi alone with the dead.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "if this be death, who would not welcome its coming? I have heard him called the King of Terrors. Surely he is an angel of peace!"

And, when she was again admitted into the chamber of death, she hung over that form, now involved in the solemn mystery of dissolution, with strange delight. Even the chill of mortality that penetrated her heart, when she pressed her hand on the icy cold forehead, communicated more rapture than dread as it thrilled through her frame. She kissed the lips, where a smile of more than mortal sweetness was lingering. She smoothed the snowy locks

back from the majestic brow, now the marble throne of everlasting rest.

"Oh death!" she murmured, "thou art lovely—oh death! thou art grand. Now I see that man was made in the imago of his God. Life may deface it, but death restores it. The impress of the Divinity is here. Oh! thou glorious temple," she added, laying her head on Father Angelo's shrouded breast, "though the Deity be departed, the shrine is holy. I will worship here till the ruins are covered with dust."

And to dust they were committed, by the side of the hapless suicide, beneath the shadow of the moss-grown rock. Blanche would gladly have remained longer in the solitude of the hermitage, but her father hastened her departure, and she obeyed his will. She prayed Naomi to accompany them; but the faithful creature refused to leave the ashes of the master she so much loved.

"I have nothing to do with the world," she said; "for the little time I shall remain on earth, I would not leave the grave of my master for the throne of the universe."

"But when you die, Naomi," cried Blanche, clinging to her, as in the early days of her dependence, "there will be no one near to minister to your wants, or to make your bed of earth by his side."

"Here is my home," cried Naomi, "and here shall be my grave. I shall never leave Rockrest."

"Then I will come again to you, my foster-mother," cried Blanche, giving her a parting embrace. "And may God bless you forever and ever."

And Blanche went forth once more into the world, bearing in her heart the mission given her by the dying hermit.

CHAPTER V.

It was probably about two years after the death of Father Angelo, that a young man went slowly winding up the solitary path that led to the hermitage. His face was pale and his brow sad, and he looked around with the air

of one who was gazing on well-remembered scenes. He entered the cabin, now deserted and damp, and shuddered at the filmy drapery of cobweb that hung upon the walls and swept across the faded pipes of the organ. He touched the keys, and recoiled at the cold touch and mournful sound rising beneath his fingers. The gray serge robe of Father Angelo hung near the organ, his oaken staff stood in a corner.

"She is not here!" exclaimed the young man. "There is nought but desolation and death! Blanche, Father Angelo, and Naomi, all gone. No living voice to speak, no living ear to listen. There was one grave here before. How many shall I find now?"

With a deep sigh he left the cabin, and sought the path that wound round the rock. It was autumn, and the dry leaves rustled mournfully under his feet He came to the spot where he had once stood with Blanche, by a green mound, while she scattered wild flowers over it. It was now covered thick with the many-colored leaves of the dying season, as well as a hillock near, which heaved higher and was of a more irregular form. While he stood with his eyes fixed on this mound, whose length exceeded even the six feet bed of earth, the usual inheritance of man, a sudden gust of wind blew aside some of the brown and yellow leaves, and he saw, with horror, something like the dress of woman. He remembered the dark peasant dress of Naomi, and took in at once the mournful history of fidelity unto death. Father Angelo had died, and the devoted creature, left to pine in solitary grief, feeling her last hour approaching, had dragged herself like the faithful dog to die upon the grave of her master. There was no other grave. Blanche was not there, unless she lay folded in the same winding-sheet of her adopted father. Clarence turned away, when the thought arrested him that perhaps life still lingered in that unburied form, life which he might perchance recall. Bending down, he carefully gathered the leaves that had fallen thickly over the face, till it lay exposed to view. With an exclamation of horror, he again dropped them and leaned shivering against the rock.

Oh, the grave is kind! Let man respect it. It hides in its sunless recess the terrible, the humiliating process

of corruption, the change from beauty to ashes, from the glory of life to the dimness and lowliness of dust. Clarence shuddered at the thought of leaving these poor decaying remains without coffin or burial. But what could he do? What assistance could he obtain in that deep solitude? And ought he, if he could, divorce that humble and devoted being from the clay on which her mouldering bosom was closely pressed? With a feeling of tenderness and respect, caused by the remembrance of her love, and care for his lost Blanche, he re-entered the cabin, took the long gray robe of Father Angelo, and, returning to the spot, spread it as a pall over the leaf-strewn body.

Where now should he turn his steps in search of his forsaken bride? He had sought her at his own home, and found her not. He had there been told of the coming of the stranger, who called himself her father, and of her departure with him to Rockrest. Deploring the jealous madness which had caused the death of his friend and the destruction of his own happiness, and unable to endure the anguish of a longer separation, he had ventured to return from exile, resolved to bear Blanche with him to some foreign land, far from the scene of the fatal tragedy, whose remembrance darkened his life. But she was gone with her new-found father, without leaving one trace to indicate the course she had taken.

"I have destroyed her love!" cried the conscience-stricken husband. "I wounded her by my suspicions, outraged her by my accusations, and crushed her by my violence. She no longer lives for me; but I will follow her from land to land and sea to sea, giving up the pursuit only with life."

Years passed away, and the memory of Blanche grew sad and pale, like the tints of the vanishing rainbow. Wherever he went he frequented the abodes of wealth and the halls of fashion, seeking in vain that fair and childish form, whose image, shadowy and unearthly as it now seemed, shielded him from the impressions of beauty and the allurements of sin.

He was in Paris. He was wandering near the close of day among the tombs of Pere le Chaise, that crowded city of the dead. He stood, with folded arms and pensive

brow, by the tomb of Abelard and Eloise, drawn by the powerful magnetism of genius, love, misfortune and death, wondering if those now mouldering hearts ever throbbed as passionately as his own, and trying to realize the humbling truth that he too must lie down in the dust like them, less happy, for he must make his last bed in loneliness and gloom, and no loving eyes mourn over his doom, no fond hand mark with sacred mementos the spot where he lay. The myriad spires of the city, crimsoned with the burning gold of the setting sun, formed a striking contrast to the scene around him. He could see in the distance the green line of trees that marked the sweep of the Boulevards, that scene of brilliancy and gayety. Around him the dark foliage of the cypress, the weeping boughs of the willow, funeral garlands twined around the stones, and crosses illuminated by the glow of the west, all spoke of the life consecrating, by the most touching acts of tenderness and love, the memory of death. The hum of the great city came rolling like a distant cataract to his ears; but the low mournful whisper of the wind through the grass, or the long, sweeping funeral branches above him, stole into his spirit with a deeper sound.

While he thus stood self-absorbed by the grave of those whose sorrows have perhaps softened too much the memory of their guilt, a gentleman and lady approached and paused by the monument, apparently drawn by the same irresistible attraction to which he himself had yielded. The gentleman had a commanding figure and dignified bearing, and there was something in his face which spake, as plainly as words could utter it, that he was linked to the dead by ties as strong as those which bound him to the living. The lady was closely vailed, but an air of youthful grace and dignity floated round her, like the folds of the gossamer web that she gathered from the breeze. The gentleman lifted his hat courteously from his head. Clarence bowed in return, drawing back at the same time, so that they could approach nearer the monument. There was something in the gentle, unspeakably graceful movements of the lady that reminded him of Blanche; but she was taller and of fuller proportions, the hair, which was visible under the folds of her vail, was of much darker hue, and the gentleman addressed her by the name of Adella.

After lingering a moment, they passed on with a graceful sign of adieu, while Clarence felt an increasing curiosity to behold the features concealed by that nun-like vail. He saw a faded rose at his feet. It must have fallen from her hand or bosom, and he gathered it up as a holy relic. He wished it was something which he was authorized to restore, as it would serve as an excuse for following her and seeking an introduction. Obeying an attraction he could not explain, he traced her footsteps and observed something glittering on the ground. It was a bracelet with a diamond clasp, composed of jet-black hair, braided with mingling tresses of spotless white. He was sure it must have fallen from the arm of the lady, and that it was a treasure for whose restoration she would be grateful. The hair of dazzling white reminded him of the long, prophetic locks of Father Angelo; but the name engraven on the back of the golden setting was Adella, and destroyed the wild hope that for a moment flashed into his mind.

Hastening his steps so as not to lose sight of the strangers, he overtook them soon after they left the inclosure, just as the carriage drew up in which they were about to enter.

"Is not this bracelet yours, madam?" said he, extending it in his hand to the lady, who turned round with a gesture of surprise at his approach. "I found it in the bower of linden trees, which shade the ashes of De Lille."

Holding out one beautiful, ungloved hand, as white as alabaster, while she pressed with the other the folds of the vail closer to her breast, she said, in a very low and sweet-toned voice—

"It is indeed mine, and very precious is it to me. I can hardly thank you sufficiently for restoring it to me."

"Shall I reclasp it?" he ventured to ask; and without waiting for permission, he encircled her fair wrist with the gem. It reminded him, in its snowy symmetry, of the arm of Blanche, and when he remembered the evening he saw her watching the sparkling brilliants with which she was adorned, fearing they would melt away like dew-drops in the sunbeams. With a deep sigh, he relinquished the hand, which showed no evidence of resentment at his boldness, when the gentleman accosted him with marked po-

liteness, and giving him a card bearing his name, requested of him the same favor. "Lord Ainsworth." He had learned at his own home the name of the father of Blanche. Though the dissimilarity of height and size, and the difference in the color of the hair, and in the name of the lady, had destroyed his first wild hope with regard to her, he could not help associating the idea of Rheinthus with this very dark and imposing-looking man.

"You will call and see us?" said Lord Ainsworth, assisting the lady in the carriage and taking a seat by her side. "You will find my address on the card. If I mistake not, we are countrymen as well as strangers in this modern Babel!"

Clarence bowed, the lady leaned her head on the shoulder of the gentleman, as if seized with sudden faintness, and the carriage drove rapidly away.

The next evening Clarence called at the lodgings of Lord Ainsworth.

"My daughter," said the nobleman, introducing the lady now no longer vailed.

The room was illuminated by shaded lamps, that gave a moonlight and subdued lustre to every object; and seen through this soft, hazy atmosphere, the daughter of Ainsworth might have been mistaken for a beautiful marble statue, clothed with the habiliments of life, so exquisitely moulded were her features, so fair and uncolored was her cheek. Her hair was parted simply on her brow, and braided behind, and the only ornament that relieved the simplicity of her dress was the bracelet of mingled jet and snow encircling her arm. Fascinated and bewildered by her resemblance to Blanche, yet feeling that it was only a resemblance, he gazed upon her with an earnestness that bowed her glances to the earth. Gradually recovering from his strange embarrassment, he entered into conversation with Lord Ainsworth, in which Adella soon participated with grace and intelligence. The evening passed away like a dream of enchantment amid the blended charms of music and conversation; for the daughter of Ainsworth possessed a voice of celestial melody, and of far greater compass and cultivation than that of the young Blanche.

"You must forgive me," said he, when he beheld her again withdrawing her eyes from his returning gaze. "But

your resemblance to a friend from whom I have been long parted, must plead my excuse."

"I trust the association is a pleasing one," she replied, with a faint smile.

Ah, that smile dispelled the illusion! When Blanche smiled it was like bright waters dimpling in the sun. Her face sparkled all over in a burst of light and gladness. The smile of Adella was pensive, and seemed only to illume the lips over which it flitted. The innocent countenance of Blanche was transparent as glass; every emotion of her soul was as visible as if it shone through crystal. With her long, vailing lashes, Adella curtained the windows of her soul, baffling the gaze of curiosity and the glance of admiration. Blanche was a creature all impulse and passion; Adella calm and saintly as a virgin priestess of the temple of Vesta.

Long after Clarence was gone, Adella—or, as we love better to call her, *Blanche*—sat with her brow leaning on her folded hands. She had met him again, the husband of her youth, the man she had loved with more than Eastern idolatry, from whom she had been so violently sundered, and whose last words echoing in her ears were more terrible than thunder, and sharper than a two-edged sword. She had met him again, after long years of separation, herself unrecognized, and tears, bitter and showering, fell from her eyes over the vanished dream of life. No wild pulsations throbbed in her heart, no lightning of rapture illumined her soul. She saw him sad, darkened by the shadow of remorse, and she pitied him. But the bright illusion which had thrown such a glory round him was dispelled. She knew him as an erring son of passion, instead of the angel of light whom she had first worshiped.

Never perhaps had a human being changed, in the same space of time, so much as Blanche. The storm which had wrecked her peace had strengthened the fibres of her character, and given it deeper root and loftier growth. At the death-bed of Father Angelo her spirit received a new consecration, and she went forth into the world angel-strengthened for its conflicts and trials. Her father, himself an accomplished scholar and gifted man, supplied her with masters in every art and science, while travel unfolded for her its mighty volume of instruction.

Blanche felt as if surrounded by a new creation, where forms of beauty and power unknown before enraptured her vision. Yet amidst all the new and glorious influences under which her mind was expanding, she never forgot the holy mission she had received from the dying Father Angelo. As the heiress of her father's vast wealth, she felt herself the almoner of Heaven's bounties, and wherever she went she sought out the poor and the afflicted, and poured balm and oil into the bleeding wounds of humanity. While her character was thus assuming a pure and celestial aspect, her countenance also wore a more heavenly and spiritual loveliness. Her almost infantine beauty disappeared, and gave place to something more exalted and womanly. The shade darkened and darkened in her hair and eyes, making her face seem still fairer and purer, like the shadows of a moonlight night on the water, making the heaven ray more dazzling by contrast. And there was something else which contributed more than all to destroy the identity of the Blanche of Rockrest with the Blanche whom Clarence beheld at the tomb of Abelard and Eloise. It was the shade of *experience* which rested, in a soft mist, on the fringes of her eyes, and lingered round the paler roses of her lips. The haunting expression of the past subdued her features, while devotion cast its saintly halo above, and glorified their charms.

She did not wonder that Clarence had not recognized her, though her resemblance to *herself* had struck him so powerfully. Her father, in consequence of the death of *his* father, now bore a titled name, and, according to his earnest desire, she had adopted that of her mother. She now rejoiced in these circumstances, as they favored her present wishes. She could study the character of her husband, discover if his heart were still true to her remembrance, or if her *present self* had power to rival her *former self* in his affections. She could ascertain if jealousy, "cruel as the grave," still lurked in his bosom, or whether, like the arch-serpent of Eden, it had been crushed under the feet of the Son of Man; and, above all, the apparently extinguished flame of love might rekindle in her own breast. The union his blood-stained hand had once severed must be sanctified by love ere it should be again renewed; and that love, too, hallowed by religion,

before she could lean upon it as the anchor of the heart, sure and steadfast.

And oh, how she longed that she might love again! not with the blind instinct which drew her to the first form of youthful beauty which had ever beamed upon her sight, but with that noble sympathy, that electric attraction which blends the soul with a kindred soul, till they both rise, as it were, in one cloud of incense unto heaven.

Weeks glided after weeks, and found Clarence day by day the companion of Blanche. Bound by a spell which grew stronger and stronger, he lingered at her side, struggling with a love which he deemed faithlessness to the rights of his supplanted wife. The passion he had cherished for her seemed a fading mirage to the glowing reality of his present feelings. He tried to vindicate himself to his conscience by repeating that it was her remarkable resemblance to Blanche which first attracted and charmed him; but the stern monitor would not suffer its warning voice to be stilled. It would whisper, and loudly too, that if Adella knew the history of Blanche, he would be forever banished from her sight. Every day he tried to summon resolution to tell her; but in her presence he forgot every thing but his love of her, and the fatal consequences of such a discovery.

At length he fell sick, worn by the struggles of contending passions, and a week passed without his calling at Lord Aimsworth's. When he came, he was pale and languid, and told her he was about to bid her farewell.

"So soon!" said she, the color going out of her lips. "So soon!"

The crisis of her fate was then near. Would he go without revealing the love which his every look and action so eloquently expressed? Would he reveal it without, at the same time, declaring the wedded ties that bound him to herself? Had her own love really revived during this daily intercourse, and was it the throes of its awakening life that now caused her heart to throb so wildly, to ache so deeply? She trembled for his honor; she trembled at the mighty dependencies which hung on that single hour.

At the sight of her unrepressed emotion, the imprisoned feelings of Clarence burst their long restraint, and he told

her all his love and all his despair. He related the whole history of his life as connected with herself, his jealousy, remorse, wanderings, return, fruitless searches; his visit to Rockrest, and subsequent ramblings. Then, with burning eloquence, he dwelt upon the new feelings she had inspired, his struggles to subdue them, struggles which left him only more hopelessly enslaved.

"An now," he exclaimed, casting himself at her feet, and seizing both trembling hands in his, "you know the wretch that prostrates himself before you, imploring you to have mercy upon him. I am a monster; for I outraged by suspicion and insult the purest and most angelic of earth's daughters. I am a murderer; for I destroyed with deliberate aim the life of my friend. I am a perjured villain, who, unworthy of the boon of life, asks only the mournful privilege of dying at your feet."

As Clarence thus poured out his soul in an agony of love and remorse, with his hands firmly grasping hers, and his eyes, with all the intensity of passion, riveted on her face, the blood, at first slowly, then quickly, then in a rushing torrent, spread over her forehead, cheeks, and bosom. Even her fingers glowed with the warm, rosy light. It was the resurrection dawn of love, the crimson hue of its morning twilight stealing over her being.

"Clarence," she said, in a low voice, and bending her head so that her breath sighed upon his cheek, "I too am bound. My vows are pledged to another—and that other"——

Clarence started to his feet, and gazed upon her as if his glance would burn into her soul. Something seemed to flash upon him suddenly, electrically. He was weak and dizzy. He put his hands to his temples, uttered an indistinct exclamation, reeled, and fell.

How long he remained insensible he knew not, for the time was a blank. When he awoke to consciousness he was reclining on a couch, whose curtains were partially drawn so as to exclude the light from his brow. A figure was bending over him that looked more like a hovering seraph than an inhabitant of this world. It was clad in a white robe, gathered round the waist by a white girdle, and flowing down to its feet in long redundant folds. The hair of the seeming vision hung loose and mantling over

its snowy drapery, its arms of celestial whiteness were extended as if to embrace him, and its starry eyes, glistening with tears, reflected their lustre on his pallid face.

For one moment he thought he was in heaven, and that the spirit of his child-bride, expanded into the full glory of immortal womanhood, was greeting him to its blissful abodes.

"Blanche! Blanche!" he exclaimed, leaning forward and opening his arms, "my angel wife! my own immortal bride!"

"Yes, Clarence, thy immortal bride!" she cried, throwing herself, in all the abandonment of restored affection, on the bosom of her husband; "for not alone for time are our hearts rewedded. The vows I now renew are for eternity. Oh, Clarence! oh, my husband! the love which now rises from the grave of passion is pure, heavenly, and undefiled. It is kindred to the divine love which God, himself inspires. Clarence, my beloved, is it thus you feel for me? Can you, in this solemn hour of our reunion, take me by the hand and say, in the name of the adorable Redeemer, that you love me with a full, undoubting trust, that you love me with the soul as well as the heart, and that you think less of our fleeting wedlock on earth than of the everlasting marriage-feast which is prepared for us hereafter?"

Clarence raised himself from the couch, and, taking the hand of Blanche firmly in his own, knelt at her side, and with fervor and humility invoked the blessing of Heaven on their reunion.

"My Christian bride," he cried, again folding her in his arms, "to your holier, purer influence I henceforth and forever yield myself. Be my partner on earth, my guide to heaven—my companion in Eternity."

THE MAIDEN OF JUDEA.

Homeward the weary warrior bent
His footsteps, from the bannered tent;
Triumph was his; the sword he wore,
Victory from twenty cities bore.
Yet not for fame, with life-blood bought,
Had Gilead's dauntless champion fought;
In Heaven's own panoply he braved
The battle, and his country saved.

He gazed where, reddened by the glow,
The oriental mountains throw,
When their high-reaching brows arrest
The rosy tints that gild the west;
He saw those native walls afar,
Where beamed the pure and vestal star
Whose rays of filial beauty shone
For him, and for her God alone.
He thought how soon her maiden charm
Would fill a conquering father's arms;
And as the tide of feeling swept
O'er his full heart, *the victor wept.*

But hark! what strain of music calls
The echoes from their rocky halls?
More near it floats, in triumph swelling,
As if some theme of glory telling.
The parting foliage backward swings,
Light, as if fanned by fairy wings;
And as the trembling leaves divide,
In the white robes of virgin pride,
The minstrel maiden meets his glance,
Weaving her country's graceful dance,
While, sweeter as she onward floats,
She wakes the timbrel's lofty notes.

Wild blossoms, that her bright locks wreathe,
O'er her pure brow their odors breathe;

Yet even their fairest tints disclose
No blush to match her cheek's soft rose.
The deepest blue of starry skies
Seems deepened in her kindling eyes,
Whose heavenward radiance now reveals
All that a chieftain's daughter feels,
Who in her warlike sire can trace
The avenger of an injured race.

But when her arms of love she flings
Around his neck, and fondly clings
To his mailed bosom, why with wild
And frenzied start, thrust back his child?
With one loud cry of piercing woe,
Turn from the light of that sweet brow,
And writhe, as if the deadly fold
Of poisonous serpent round him rolled?
The memory of his fatal vow
Flashes like blasting lightning now;
That vow, breathed forth on battle-field,
By victory's bloody signet sealed.

As bends the lily, when the wrath
Of northern winds sweeps o'er its path;
Just as its fair, unfolding bloom,
The sun's parental beams illume;
So torn from nature's dearest stay,
Pale, trembling, at his feet she lay;
While loose, on her reclining head,
Her unshorn ringlets o'er them spread.

Jephthah beheld the only flower
Left to adorn his widowed bower,
Whose virgin beauty grew so fair,
It seemed some fostering angel's care
Had to this cherished blossom given
The purity and bloom of Heaven;
Drooping, as if a sudden blast
O'er her young charms a blight had cast,
And the dry agony of grief
Through gushing fountains sought relief.

"Oh thus," the melted warrior cried,
"Pure from the stains of earthly pride,
Pure from all sin, the offering be
Our hearts devote, O Lord! to thee,
My child;" and bending down he prest
The pallid maiden to his breast.

"My blameless child, a fearful doom
Hangs trembling o'er thy life's young bloom;
Though thousand lives I would resign,
Even for one hour, to ransom thine;
Through me my spotless lamb must bleed,
The altar's holy flame to feed.
Oh! when to Israel's God I vowed,
While round me rolled war's fiery cloud,
If the Great Spirit of His might
Led me victorious through the fight,
What first my glad return would hail,
To native Mizpan's rescued vale,
A votive sacrifice should raise
The incense of my country's praise.
I little thought that *thou*, the dear,
The only treasure left me here,
In whom I've garnered all my joys——"
O'ermastering nature checked his voice,
And all the human heart can bear
Of deep, unutterable despair,
Spoke, in the darkening glance he bent,
Upon the gorgeous firmament,
As if its broad, refulgent glow,
Shone but in mockery of his woe.

And she, the gentle and the young,
If iron nerves were thus unstrung,
Did not her reeling reason fly,
Her fluttering life-pulse faint and die
No! while sustained in that dear fold
Of weeping love, her doom was told—
A light, like morning's breaking ray,
Began o'er her wan cheek to play—
With triumph kindling in her look,
Backward the vailing locks she shook,
Whose waves of amber seemed to throw
A glory round her lifted brow;
And with a calm and heavenly smile,
As if the altar's sacred pile
Already for the victim blazed,
Her unpolluted hands she raised:
Where sleeps my father's manly pride?"
The death-devoted maiden cried.
Oh! let not tears so weak and vain
The warrior's noble cheek distain;
Think, what a glorious fate, to be
A covenant 'twixt my God and thee;

Deemed worthy in His holy eye,
An offering, on His shrine to lie,
While virgin innocence and truth
Adorn the blossoms of my youth!
The whitest lamb of Gilead's flock
Is driven from the mountain rock;
The fairest flowers of Gilead deck
The fleecy victim's snow-white neck,
When grateful hearts to Heaven would bear
The incense of devotion's prayer.
Then weep not, father; to thy vow
A willing sacrifice I bow;
I came, with joy's bright garlands crowned,
To minstrelsy's exulting sound.
As Israel's daughters wont to grace
The triumphs of their chosen race:
Away, this worthless wreath I tear,
The martyr's deathless palm to wear;
Hushed be the timbrel's echoing swell,
I go, in music's courts to dwell."

Breathless, she paused—a softer mood
Her eyes' unearthly fire subdued—
And toward her native mountains turning,
Where the last flames of day were burning,
The chords of earthly feeling woke
Their last vibration as she spoke:
Yet oh!" she added, "ere my sire
Shall lead me to the kindling pyre,
Let me on those green hills once more
The scenes of early joy explore;
There, with the virgin train, who lead
Their flocks on tenderest herbs to feed;
While near the shades and gushing springs,
They tune their wild harp's sounding strings,
My soul, with penitence and prayer,
Shall for the solemn rite prepare.
And when another spring renews
Its flowery sweets and genial dews,
The daughters of my tribe shall come
With wreaths symbolic of my bloom,
And mourn me, as a tender hart,
Pierced by the forest hunter's dart.
Oh! think not earth's fond memories cling,
To chain my spirit's mounting wing;
But when in Zion's fairer land,
I join the seraphs' white-robed band.

'Tis sweet to think, where once I smiled,
They'll still remember Jephthah's child;
And as yon twilight's golden ray
Reflects the vanished beams of day,
My memory will a light impart,
To cheer a father's lonely heart."

Thus meek and pure, the lamb was led to slaughter,
Thus perished, in her bloom, Judea's daughter.

THE PEA-GREEN TAFFETA.

ESTELLE, a little older than when she last appeared before the reader at the wedding-feast of her sisters, was seated at the side of her ancient aunt. It was a dark, rainy night, and the child, as she looked from the hearth to the windows, against which the sere leaves drifted, thought of her far away sisters, Emma and Bessy, and was sad. She was getting to be a little more womanly in her tastes—more literary—was especially fond of romantic tales of love and chivalry, and, consequently, did not draw quite so largely from Aunt Patty's Scrap Bag as she formerly did. Yet there were moments, such as the present, when that venerable receptacle seemed to her, as in the morning of childhood, the hidding-place of the genii.

"Aunt Patty," said she, opening the closet, mounting a high chair, taking down the memorable bag, and depositing it in Aunt Patty's lap, "tell me the history of some of your scraps, to-night. There is a plenty left here, though I made that large patch-work counterpane, so carefully put aside. Aunt Patty, I do believe your scraps are like the Widow's cruise. You may take ever so many out, yet there are ever so many left."

"Yes, yes," replied Aunt Patty, trying to draw up the contracted sinews of her neck, but suffering it to fall painfully again toward the left side, "when so many nice, friendly fingers are filling it up all the time, it isn't strange that the bag, like the cruise, keeps full. Let me see. These are most all new scraps. Somehow or other, I can't remember about these, as I can the pieces given me long ago. The people, now-a-days, it seems to me, don't do as many smart things, nor say as many smart sayings, as they did in Parson Broomfield's day. They are more alike, as it were, and what you hear of one will do about

as well for another. There is nothing to remember, and I know I've got as good a memory as any body of my age ever did have. I don't believe there is one single thing that happened when I was a girl, and that I then knew of, that ever escaped me."

"I remember every thing that Frank says and does, Aunt Patty. I wonder to hear you say that the people were smarter when you were young than they are now. Mr. Selwyn said the world was growing better and wiser every day. I'm sure I grow wiser every day myself."

It was amusing to see the air of precocious wisdom that dignified Estelle's blooming face. Aunt Patty smiled benignantly, fully believing all that she asserted of herself, though somewhat doubting the truth of Mr. Selwyn's remark, and leaning forward on her crutch, put her trembling right hand into the bag.

"How in the world," she exclaimed, drawing a piece of pea-green colored taffeta from the rainbow shreds on the top, "how in the world did that get here, mixed up with the new scraps? This belongs to old-time history. Well, well; this does carry me back, sure enough, a long way, full fifty years, if not more, when I saw Patience Hilliard dressed out in that fine smooth taffeta, looking so fine and pretty, just as if she stepped out of a new band-box. Poor Patience! I wonder if she is alive now."

"What makes you call her poor, aunt Patty? I should think anybody who wore such a fine rich silk as this, ought to be rich."

"There's such a thing as shining in borrowed plumes, child, as you shall hear presently. And that reminds me of a bad habit little girls have now-a-days. Borrowing each other's finery and tricking themselves out in each other's rings and gew-gaws, like the Jackdaw in Æsop's Fables. Don't do any such thing, darling. It will be sure to bring you into trouble. Now, Patience Hilliard was a poor girl, and used to dress, at home, in homespun, and nothing finer than calico abroad. Her mother got her living by spinning and weaving, and making butter and cheese, and such like. Patience was right industrious and helped her mother as much as she could, so that she got her name up for being the smartest girl for work anywhere about. She was as pretty a girl, too, as one wants

to look upon, and always as neat as a new-bound hymn book. It was a pity she got it into her head to be proud of her good looks and ashamed of her nice, homely dress. But that wasn't so much her fault, as the silly folks that were always flattering and fooling her. She used to carry the butter to the stores, all stamped up with flowers and devices, and I remember it was the nicest butter I ever saw in my life. Mrs. Hilliard had a nice, green clover patch behind the house, and her cows didn't starve, I assure you. All her butter was as yellow as gold, and it turned into gold, too. The young men who stood behind the counters, used to praise Patience's red cheeks and bright eyes more than they did the butter, so I've heard say, till she set such store by her beauty that she took mincing steps and talked as if cotton was in her mouth. In those days we used to have quilting frolics, and many times they were worth a dozen such stiff, formal parties as they have now."

"Why didn't we have a quilting frolic, Aunt Patty, when the *scrap* counterpane was quilted? It would have been such a nice opportunity."

"Well, I don't know, child. I suppose it is because I am too old to think of such things, and Mrs. Worth, my niece Emma, that was, don't care about that kind of party gathering. When she was a young girl, she never did. She never liked forfeits."

"Do grown folks ever play forfeits, Aunt Patty?" asked Estelle, opening her blue eyes in astonishment. "I thought it was children's play."

"There's many a grown-up child, darling, and life is pretty much made up of children's play. Well, I was talking about quiltings. If they are old-fashioned now, they were all the rage then. The young men—they used to call them *sparks*—always came after the quilting was over, and the fiddler came, too, and they wound up with a dance. Now, one of our neighbors had a mighty great quilting, and invited ever so many young people to it. Though I was always so lame and awkward, and couldn't dance, I could use my needle curiously, and they were always glad to get me at the quilting frame. I was never thinking about the sparks like the other girls, and kept steadier to my work."

"Why, Aunt Patty! What's the reason you never thought of them?"

"Because there is not one in a hundred worth thinking about, and they are all after beauty and finery, and havn't a word to fling away to a poor cripple like me." Now, Patience never wanted for admirers, though she would have been better off without them, for had it not been for them she never would have thought of doing the mean trick I am going to tell you about. Just before the great quilting, Patience went to take care of a lady who was sick—a very rich and beautiful lady—who wore the prettiest clothes of any one in town. She never went to any of the gatherings, for she lived, as it were, above them; and yet she was so good and kind to the poor, nobody called her proud. Patience couldn't come to the quilting; but when the dance began, she came rustling into the room in a beautiful, shining pea-green taffeta, just like this. I could hardly believe my own eyes, for I'd never seen her dressed in any thing finer than calico before. She had artificial flowers in her hair and gold ear-rings in her ear, all set with pearls. She swam about, for all the world like a peacock with its tail flashing in the sun, and, really, if it hadn't been for the astonishment one felt, one couldn't help thinking she was wonderful pretty. There happened, (I can't conceive how, but he was sure enough there,) there happened to be a young Frenchman there, who danced as light as a butterfly, and had teeth as white as polished ivory. He took a wondrous fancy to Patience, whom he probably thought the finest lady in the room. Everybody was whispering about Patience and wondering where her fine dress came from.

"It isn't hers," said one, "any more than it's mine. If it is, she stole the money to buy it, for butter and cheese never manufactured that."

"I don't believe no such thing," says I, thinking it right to take her part, because they were all talking behind her back, which was mean and unchristian-like. "Patience always was an honest girl and her mother brought her up well. It must be a present to her. I dare say Mrs. Shaler gave it to her. That was the name of the sick lady; and I really did believe it, though I didn't think of it before I said it. Patience was a belle that night if there

ever was one. Her cheeks were as red as damask roses, and her eyes sparkled like live diamonds. Yet she looked uneasy-like, as if she didn't want us to follow her too close, or watch her too hard. I tell you what, Estelle, it must be an awful feeling when anybody does any thing they don't want *found out;* but, remember, the Lord finds out everything we do, just as easy as if it were done in broad sunshine, no matter how secret and dark we may be. Toward the close of the evening, when Patience was dancing more like a spirit than a human being, her dress caught a nail and tore a great ugly place right in the front breadth. I thought she would have gone raving distracted about it. Everybody got round her to see what was the matter."

"This is a bad accident," said the young Frenchman, who was dancing with her.

"No, sir," she cried, sobbing like a baby, "it is a pea-green taffeta."

Every body laughed, and that only made her cry the more. I couldn't help feeling sorry for her; so I told her if she would come into another room with me I would try to mend it for her as well as I could. I was always considered a good hand at darning, though one wouldn't think so, to see my poor fingers. I made her take off the dress, and set to work in right good earnest, and it really looked so nice one hardly could tell where the rent was. But one of the girls that belonged to the house, and I do believe she did it out of envy and spite, insisted upon pressing it with a warm iron, to flatten the stitches, and she scorched it as brown as my snuff. There was a piece as large as the palm of my two hands scorched right out.

"Oh! mercy," cried Patience, turning as white as a snow-flake, and wringing her hands, "what shall I do? I'm ruined and undone—I wish I was dead—I wish I'd never been born."

"I'd be ashamed to take on so, about a fine dress," cried the girl, who had spoiled it; "it's right down wicked, I declare it is."

"You did wrong to burn it," says I, looking her right in the eye, all the time—"you know you did—you never tried the iron on a piece of cloth first, to see if it was hot

You wouldn't have served your own dress so, you know you wouldn't."

She got mad at that, and went out slamming the door after her. Then Patience and I were alone, and though I thought she was wrong, I tried to comfort her!

"Oh! Patty," said she, "I'll tell you—I couldn't tell any body else in the whole world. If it was mine, I wouldn't mind it so—but it is Mrs. Shaler's. I took it out of her bureau drawer, thinking it would do no harm, and that she never would know any thing about it. I meant to put it back, and all the other things too—oh, dear! What shall I do? What will become of me?"

"Tell the truth, Patience," says I, feeling wonderful bold to speak, for I knew I had right on my side. "She won't be half as angry, as she will to find it out in any other way, for find it out, she must. Besides, it is your duty, and as you've done the sin, you ought to bear the shame."

"I can't," she cried. "I havn't got courage enough; you might do it, but I can't. If we cut a piece off the breadth, perhaps she never would know it. Please help me, Patty, and see if it would do."

I shook my head and told her I wouldn't have any thing to do with it, if she went on deceiving, but if she was willing to tell the righteous truth, I would go to Mrs. Shaler's the next day, and stand by her while she did it.

Patience never went back into the dancing room that night, but when the quilting broke up, she peeped out of the window and saw the young Frenchman, that was so taken with her, waiting on a girl with a calico frock on, one whom she despised too. The way she cried then, I couldn't begin to tell, for he had asked if he might wait on her, most as soon as she came into the room. I don't believe she slept one wink that night, for when the conscience is unquiet the eye-lids won't stay down.

"How can you tell, Aunt Patty," asked Estelle, looking up fondly to that good, but homely face, "when you never did any thing wrong, in your life?"

"That wont do to say," replied Aunt Patty, meekly, laying her hand gently on Estelle's ringleted head, while a warm and genial ray of satisfaction penetrated her heart, at this expression of perfect confidence in her excel

lence—"I'm nothing but a poor, erring creature at the best, but I do try to walk in the right way.—Thank the Lord! the lame can find room in the straight and narrow path, as well as the whole and strong. If it were not for this crutch, I might be further from the kingdom of Heaven than I now am."

"Did you really go to Mrs. Shaler's, Aunt Patty?" asked Estelle, after a pause, in which Aunt Patty seemed lost in devout meditation.

"Yes, child, I did go; and I wouldn't have missed it for all the pea-green taffetas this room could hold."

"Please tell her," said Patience, "I can't do it. I should die before I got through."

I never pitied any body worse in my life, than I did Patience. Her eyes were all swelled up, and there was a red rim round them, and her cheeks were all of a bluish white. I walked softly into the room, making as little noise as I could with my crutch, on the fine, soft carpet. I had never seen Mrs. Shaler since she was sick, and I hardly knew her, her face looked so thin and white, and then she looked so sad and wistful out of her eyes, a kind of farewell look, as if she felt she was going to die. She held out her hand, and I was most afraid to touch it, so little and weak it appeared, at the side of mine.

"Mrs. Shaler," says I, "I don't want to worry you, and I hope you won't be angry—but Patience"—here Patience burst out a sobbing, and I choked so, I couldn't speak one word. But presently I got my courage up, and told her the whole story, from beginning to end, without any palavering, and begged her to pardon Patience, as she expected the Lord Almighty would pardon her at the judgment day. I never shall forget her look, never, when I had finished. Do you think she was angry?"

"Oh, no!" answered Estelle, "but sorry, very sorry. Was she not?"

"Yes! her beautiful sad-looking eyes filled with tears, as they fixed themselves on Patience, who stood by the side of the bed, with her apron all over her face. Clasping her thin white hands together and lifting them upward.

"Oh!" she cried, in a voice scarcely above a whisper,

"of how little value is a silk dress to me, lying as I am, on a dying bed. A white muslin shroud for my body and a wedding garment for my soul, is all I now ask of man or God."

It was the solemnest scene I ever beheld. It seemed as if an angel was speaking. She didn't look as if she belonged to this world; and I hardly felt that I was in it myself. There was something, I can't tell what, that made Patience take the apron from her face and look right at her.

"Yes, look at me," said the sick lady, in such a gentle, mournful tone, the tears streamed from my eyes to hear her—"look at me, poor, deluded girl. What are beauty, dress, or admiration to me? Shadows, shadows, all vanished away! There is but one reality, and that is eternity. Remember this when I am gone—and set not your heart on the passing vanities of earth."

"Oh, Mrs. Shaler"—interrupted Patience, in a burst of penitence and grief, "if you'll only forgive me this time, I'll never do so no more."

"I forgive you freely," said the sick lady—"and may God open your eyes, to see the power of truth and the beauty of holiness."

"Estelle, I never forgot that morning—I never shall; old as I am now, and though that frail, beautiful form is all dust and ashes, mingling with common dust—it comes back to me all alive as it were, as if but a day had passed since then. As I was leaving the room, she called me back to the bedside and said—

"You are a good girl, Patty—I've heard Parson Broomfield speak of you, Patty; I'm going to the land where the lame shall need no crutch, for the Lord God shall be their strength and their stay."

Aunt Patty paused, and taking her handkerchief from her pocket held it to her eyes. The memories of her youth rushed in such a full stream through the channel of age, that the waters overflowed. Estelle, over whose sweet, young face, a soft, solemn shadow had been gradually stealing, laid her head on Aunt Patty's lap and wept from sympathy.

"Did she die, Aunt Patty?"

"Yes, not many weeks after, she was laid in her grave,

but I believe if ever a soul went to glory, hers did. It was the longest funeral I ever saw. Every body followed her; the poor as well as the rich, and I don't believe there was a dry eye, when Parson Broomfield preached her funeral sermon. Oh! he was a glorious man, Parson Broomfield was. I've heard good preaching since, but never any body that preached like him. It seemed, when you were listening to him, as if somebody was pouring oil all over the soul—and he too, is singing the song of Moses and the Lamb!"

Again the waters of memory overflowed, for the valves that close over the sensibilities of age are easily opened. That beloved and venerated name always touched a master chord and produced a long vibration.

"What became of Patience?" said Estelle. "Did she never get married?"

"I never saw any thing like children," said Aunt Patty, taking a large pinch of snuff, from the gold box Mr. Selwyn presented her on his wedding eve. "They always ask such silly questions, as if all a woman was born and bred for was to get married. Why, some of the best women that ever lived are old maids, I just as lief speak it as not, and walk alone through the world scattering blessings every step they take. I do think they are the most unselfish beings in the world, if they aint selfish. St. Paul says it is better not to marry, but to live to glorify the Lord, and every body knows he was inspired and spoke with a cloven tongue of fire."

"*I* don't mean to marry," said Estelle, emphatically. "I think you are right, Aunt Patty, it *is* better to be single. Frank asked me to wait for him, but I wouldn't leave you and mother for any body, though I liked them ever so well. But you did not tell me about Patience."

"Patience," said her historian, "was an altered girl, from the morning I told Mrs. Shaler about the taffeta. She gave up all her airs and finery, and though the girls in the village taunted her and called her by the nick name of "Pea-Green Taffeta," she never talked back to them, but looked meek and sorry, remembering what Mrs. Shaler had said to her. You can't think how much prettier she grew, for the spirit that is in one makes a wonderful difference in the looks. She did not care about going

to any more dances, but the young men waited on her to the singing school as if nothing had happened. She used to meet the young Frenchman there, for he staid about the village, and after awhile she walked home with nobody else but him. The people began to talk and whisper, and said he was making a fool of her, but one Sunday morning they were published, and in a month more they were married, and I was at the wedding. Patience hadn't on one bit of finery, not even so much as a real flower, nothing but a plain, white dress, not so much as a lace tucker on it. Folks said she'd repent of her bargain, for he couldn't be much, to marry a poor girl like her. But he *was* a nice young man and made her a good husband, as far as I know; he set up a sort of fancy shop and every one liked to buy of him, he bowed so much and had such a pleasant way of smiling and showing his white teeth."

"Patty," she used to say sometimes—"if it had not been for you—oh! Patty, you've been a good friend to me."

"I left the place when your mother married, and have never seen her since."

"How did you get this scrap of silk, Aunt Patty?"

"I just cut a *little* piece from the top of the skirt, where it was turned under, that time I mended it for Patience—I didn't call that any robbery."

"Oh no!" cried the child; "but here is a pretty piece of purple satin. Whose was that?"

"Never mind now; it is getting sleepy time—one of these days, perhaps, I will tell you all about it."

THE PURPLE SATIN DRESS.

"Now, tell me, Aunt Patty, about the piece of purple satin," said Estelle, while she plied her busy needle, in manufacturing a cap for her aged relative. "You promised me, you know, when you related the history of the pea-green silk taffeta. It seems to me there must be something very interesting connected with this It has such a rich, beautiful color, and is so thick and glossy."

"Let me look at it, child," said Aunt Patty, putting on her spectacles and stretching out her hand, in which Estelle laid the shining morceau. "I can always remember any thing better, when I look at it. Yes, this *is* fine, and it belonged to a fine lady—and she lived in a grand house, the grandest in the whole town. When I was a young girl, I used to stay week after week, in that house; and the merry times they had there, I could not begin to tell."

"You, Aunt Patty! How came you to be in such a grand house, and with such fine folks?"

Why, you know we always kept the best of company, and though we had no pomp or finery ourselves, we had more chances than one to see it in others. Mrs. Delville used to come to our house and take a great deal of notice of me, and call me her poor lame Patty, so kindly, it warmed my heart to hear her. I never expected any one to take notice of me, and when they did, I felt as you do, when the sun shines out on a cloudy day. Once Mrs. Delville sent for me, to make her a long visit, because, she said, she was lonely and wanted some pleasant company, as if I could entertain such a fine lady as she was.

Well, I hadn't been with her more than a day or two, when there came three young ladies from the city to see her, and three prettier creatures I never set eyes on. Their name was Morrison. The oldest was Cornelin, but every

body called her Neely—and the second was Margaret, and the third Grace. One looked hardly older than the other, and it was hard to tell which was the handsomest. They all looked like so many pictures, and I, who always loved to look on beautiful things, never was tired with gazing at them. I really believe, I've sat for hours together, looking first at one and then at the other, watching their eyes sparkle, and thinking of the stars twinkling way up in the sky. Grace had a kind of innocent, childish turn, that the others hadn't, and she seemed to take to me more than the rest. Mrs. Delville invited all the young company in the neighborhood to meet them, but I always staid by myself, in spite of all they could say and do. I never complained that the Lord didn't make me as pretty as most people; and when at home and among friends, I never thought of my looks. Provided they treated me kindly, I was satisfied and happy. But I never could bear to go among strangers, and have them stare at me, and ask who that homely, lame young person was—and then to set myself by the side of those beautiful creatures, all dressed in muslin and laces, I never could do it.

"You always tell me, Aunt Patty," said Estelle, raising her deep blue eyes suddenly to Aunt Patty's face, while a smile played upon her lips—"that it is no matter how we look, if we are only good and amiable—'handsome is, that handsome does,' you say. According to that, you must be beautiful, Aunt Patty."

"That's true, my darling, but young men always will be looking after pretty faces, though they are often sorry enough for it in the end." There was one young man who used to come every evening to Mrs. Delville's, and the oftener he came, the gladder they always were to see him. He was an officer in the Army, and his name was Captain Lynmore. I never went into the parlor at night, but I could see the company walking about the garden of a moonlight evening, all in pairs, and the white dresses of the ladies fluttered about among the green trees and flowers, looking like so many fairies. Captain Lynmore was a tall, stately looking man; tall enough to make my neck ache to reach up to him, so as to see his face. The ladies praised him to the skies, and seemed to think there was nobody in the world like him. Mrs. Delville

said she would like of all things, to know which was his favorite, but for her life she couldn't tell. She believed for her part, that he was in love with them all. I noticed that though Grace praised him least of all, she always blushed when they talked about him, and pretended not to listen. Sometimes she made believe to find fault with him, and said she didn't see any thing in him to take on about, but one could see that this was all put on.

They were always getting up some kind of frolic or other, for Mrs. Delville was a merry lady and never was so happy as when she saw smiling faces around her. She had passed several years in Europe and had brought home the greatest quantity of finery you ever saw. She was presented at Court, while she was there, and there were four or five dresses hanging in her wardrobe, that she wore, when she went to the palace of the king. There was a crimson silk velvet, all trimmed with gold frogs and golden fringe; and a green silk velvet with silver frogs and silver fringe; and a beautiful purple satin, trimmed all round with ermine as white as the drifted snow.

"Ah! I'm so glad you've come to the purple satin. Please don't loose sight of it again."

One night, continued Aunt Patty, smoothing the scrap on her right knee, Mrs. Delville took her fine court dresses out of the wardrobe and spreading them out on the bed, told the girls she was going to get up a kind of little masquerade, and they must put on her Royal robes for the occasion. Mr. Delville had a court dress of black silk velvet trimmed with gold lace, that Captain Lynmore was to wear, and would you believe it, Mrs. Delville tried to make *me* dress up and pretend to be somebody. But I told her, they ought to have somebody to look on, and I promised to slide into a corner of the parlor where, in the shade of the dark-green curtains, I could peep at what was going on. I wish I could describe to you the magnificent figures the three girls made in their glittering dresses, with the long trains sweeping behind them. Grace wore the purple satin with the ermine border, and it fitted her like a glove. Mrs. Delville made her put on some pearl ornaments of hers too, but the prettiest ornament of the whole was a white rose bud, she had twisted carelessly in her shining dark hair. This was all done for a frolic,

you know, for there was nobody invited but what was staying in the house already. As I sat in my corner I could see every thing that was going on, and I thought I knew more than some in the midst of the game.

Captain Lynmore looked like a prince; and though there were other gentlemen in the room, the young girls had eyes for none but him, he made the rest seem so insignificant. You know some people have naturally a royal way with them, and he was just such a one. Nelly, the eldest sister, who wore the crimson velvet robe, with something grand and shining on her head in the shape of a half moon, walked as if she was a king's wife and he not good enough for her. She kept Captain Lynmore close to her the greatest part of the evening, though I could not help thinking that he would have liked to talk to somebody else. But she had a way of fastening people to her, whether they wanted to or not, so that it was very hard to get away from her. Margaret did not seem to care about any one in particular, but laughed and talked with all, looking in her beautiful green velvet, like a pink bursting into bloom. Grace did not look gay or lively like the rest; she was pale, and sometimes a sadness would steal over her that she tried to shake off and could not. Once in a while, her eyes, (and they were the softest, brightest eyes that ever shone in a mortal head,) would follow Captain Lynmore and her sister, as they swept up and down the room, playing state, with such a grace, and then she would turn away with a sigh. I heard somebody say to her "What a handsome couple your sister and Captain Lynmore would make! I don't wonder they are in love with each other." Grace drew a quick short breath and came and sat down by me.

"Patty," says she, "I envy you, from the bottom of my heart, you dear, good creature."

"What in the world can you envy me for?" says I, thinking, maybe, that she was making fun of me.

"Oh!" says she, laughing and blushing together, "I don't believe you were ever in love, were you?"

"No, indeed," says I, quite scandalized, "I think it a disgrace for a girl to fall in love, without being asked. I would as soon cut off my right hand."

I wish you could have seen her, Estelle; when I said

that, her cheeks turned the color of scarlet and her eyes flashed up, like a fire light on the wintry hearth.

Says she, "Patty, I hope you do not mean any reflection on me, by that remark."

"I don't mean nothing wrong," said I, "and I never thought you would take it to yourself, I am sure. I am sorry if I hurt your feelings."

She looked at me right hard as I spoke and her eyes softened till they looked like velvet. Laying her beautiful white hand on my arm, she said:

"I don't believe you would intentionally wound the feelings of any one. I did not mean to speak so quickly. Come in Mrs. Delville's room with me, will you? I see they are preparing for a dance, and I do not wish to join in it."

With that she put her arm round me and sort of drew me coaxingly out of the room. "There, Patty," says she, "sit down in that rocking-chair, and tell me what you think of me."

I looked up in astonishment at those words, but when I saw her right opposite in her splendid dress, with her vail of white gossamer lace thrown back from her face, looking so fair and beautiful, I could not help saying:

"I think you are the prettiest creature I ever saw in my life, but you have no right to be proud of it; for you and I both are as the Lord made us."

"Oh! Patty, you don't say I'm pretty," says she, catching me round the neck and kissing me, with her own sweet lips; "if it were not for one person, I would not care how I looked." Then changing her voice she added:

"Do you think Captain Lynmore loves sister Neely? Do you really think so?"

"I don't know enough about love," says I, feeling ashamed, though I don't know why I did, "to know what its signs are; you know better than I."

"Oh!" says she, clasping her hands tight together and lifting them up a little, "if I thought it were really so, I should be wicked enough to wish to die. Patty, pity me; I am the most foolish, the most inconsistent being in the world, and the most unhappy. Don't think strange of me, but it is such a comfort to have some one, to whom I can open my heart, and you look so good."

Just at this moment, Mrs. Delville burst into the room, calling on Grace to come immediately and make up the dance, that they could not do without her.

"Is sister Neely going to dance?" asked she quickly.

"Yes, she is standing up with Captain Lynmore *of course*," says Mrs. Delville, significantly.

"Yes, yes, let us haste to the dance," says Grace gayly, holding up her train and showing her white satin skirt underneath. I didn't know what to make of her, she seemed so sad before, and then brightened up so suddenly, but I followed her in, and slid down into my little shaded corner.

"I can't tell you," continued Aunt Patty, "how bewildered I felt, looking at that company, dressed up so fine and gay, knowing too, all the while, that she, who seemed the gayest and was the fairest, was sad at heart for all her smiles. I was then young, darling, and had foolish thoughts like other girls, though I tried to shut them out. I sometimes thought it must be mighty pleasant to be attended to by the young men, and that young girls, who were praised and flattered for their beauty, must be happier than such poor, crippled, misshapen beings as myself. But this night I found out that one might be pretty, prized and sought after, and yet if the right one did not come to praise and seek after, one might be perfectly miserable, as it were. And I prayed the Lord, in the silence of my little corner, that my thoughts might not be permitted to wander into forbidden regions; and I blessed him, for making me, even as I was, secure from the temptations of vanity and pride."

The partner of Grace, was a fine young man, just as handsome as Captain Lynmore, but I could see plain enough, that though she laughed and talked with him, she was not thinking of him, but of the one that was dancing with her sister Neely, and yet for all that, she made believe that she did not care one cent for him, and when it was her time to turn him in the dance, she hardly touched his hand, and looked right another way. When Grace stood at the head of the dance, it was a kind of fancy dance, that I never saw before, (for at the quiltings, that I told you about, they danced nothing but reels.)

Mrs. Delville, thinking maybe, I looked lonely, came and took a seat by me.

"Patty," says she, "I am afraid that you will be tired sitting here by yourself. You and I are lookers on in Venice."

I didn't know what she meant by that, but I knew it must be something pleasant, and I smiled and said, I was glad that I took pleasure in looking at beautiful objects, and that a prettier sight I never had had a chance of seeing.

"Mrs. Delville," says I, clearing my throat that felt wondrous husky, "do you think Captain Lynmore and Miss Neely are going to get married?"

"I don't know," says she, they would make a splendid looking couple. Grace is *my* favorite, but I don't think she cares for him."

Just at this moment, as I was looking at Grace, who stood under the blaze of the chandelier, with her back to a lamp, burning on the mantel-piece, it seemed that she was wrapped in living flame. Her vail, which fluttered from her head, was blown by the wind into the blaze of the lamp, and she never knew it. Before I could find breath to scream, Captain Lynmore darted forward from the foot of the dance, and throwing his arms right round her, tore off the burning vail, and crushed the flames of her dress, with his hands. I never heard such shrieks as filled the room, and her sisters ran to and fro, wringing their hands, too much frightened to do any thing. Grace looked up in the Captain's face, and such a smile I never saw before. You remember, Estelle, how you made me look out of the window the other night, to see how the moon looked, shining on the water. Just so sweet was the smile of that pale, beautiful face. "Why, what is the matter, child? What makes you cry?"

"I don't know, Aunt Patty, I am so interested; was she burned? was she scarred? I am so glad Captain Lynmore put out the flames."

"So was I," cried Aunt Patty, "I really couldn't be sorry for the accident, that made her smile so sweetly, but the next moment, her eyes closed, her face turned as white as a corpse, and she fell like a dead person against his breast. He looked about him, like a distracted person, and taking her up, as if she were a child, hurried off into

the next room and laid her on a sofa. Then he dropped down on his knees before her, and talked as if he was beside himself. Mrs. Delville could scarcely get him out of the room, so as to unloosen Grace's dress, for she knew she had only fainted.

"No, no, no," says she, pushing him away by the shoulder, "she is not dead; let me get to her. But good heavens, Captain Lynmore, look at your hands, they are bleeding and raw; oh dear, what shall I do? Who will attend to Captain Lynmore's hands?"

Now, I had seen my mother put cotton on burns, because she said it kept the air out, and I thought if I wrapped up Captain Lynmore's hands in it, the best way I could, it would be better than letting them bleed and suffer, as I knew they did. So while Mrs. Delville was busy with Grace, I followed the Captain, and made bold to offer my services. He seemed as grateful as could be, and as gentle as a lamb, for all he must have been in a world of pain.

"Patty," says he, (it is strange how every body called me Patty,) "you are very kind, but oh! be kinder still, and inquire how *she* is now. Tell me if she has recovered; tell me if she lives; I cannot bear this suspense."

I went and opened the door where she was, and the first thing I saw was her beautiful eyes, looking right at me, as she lay on the sofa, with her sister and Mrs. Delville close by her. The purple satin dress lay all scorched and tattered on the floor, with its white ermine trimming soiled and blackened. What a pity! spoiled just for a frolic.

Grace held out her hand, and I went up to her and asked her how she felt, and that Captain Lynmore couldn't be easy till he knew. She blushed up like a summer rose, and said she was better, much better.

"Please tell him so, Patty," said she, giving my hand a soft, loving pressure, "and tell him too, I have no words to thank him, but oh! I feel so grateful," here she let go my hand and laid her own on her heart, which seemed to flutter like a bird.

Neely was standing close by the sofa, and I happened to be looking at her, and I never saw any body's countenance change so. It turned so dark and all the color

faded away on her lips and cheeks. All her beauty appeared to vanish, and as she fixed her eyes steadfastly on Grace, there was something in them, that I do say, made me tremble all over. All at once, she said out,

"Sister, did you know that your hair was all burnt off behind?"

Grace raised her hand to her head, where, sure enough, her beautiful dark hair was all scorched and frizzled.

"It is indeed so, but," she added, sitting up and leaning anxiously forward; "surely Captain Lynmore must be suffering for all this. How selfish I am not to think of it sooner. Mrs. Delville, tell me if it is not so."

"His hands are badly burned," replied Mrs. Delville, "but Patty has bandaged them nicely with cotton, and I trust they will soon be healed. I have sent for a physician, however, fearing that you, too, might be seriously injured."

"I am not burned," said she, the tears gushing from her eyes; "but it is so sad to think I have made others suffer. Your costly dress, too, is all ruined. How sorry I am."

"Never mind the dress," says Mrs. Delville kindly, "I do not consider it of any consequence. It performed its mission long ago."

She lifted it up as she spoke, and a piece of it fell off just at my feet. It looked like a shining purple feather fluttering down. I picked it up and put it in my pocket, and this is the very scrap. I cut off the burnt edges and it don't look as if fire had ever been near it. I do wonder what she did with the rest of it.

"I wonder what became of Captain Lynmore and Grace, Aunt Patty. I am afraid of Neely's dark looks; I don't think I like Captain Lynmore. Why didn't he dance with Grace, when he liked her so much, and it would have made her so happy?"

"I don't know, child. He thought she didn't care about him, and Neely flattered him and hung upon his words, as if she was feeding on manna. I found out too, that she made him think Grace was engaged to be married, which was a sin and a shame, considering there wasn't a word of truth in it. Now, I don't conceive how a person ——"

Here Estelle made an impatient gesture, fearing Aunt Patty was about to indulge in a train of moral reflections, which she was in the habit of doing more and more.

"Well, Aunt Patty," says she, laying her hands across her lap and looking earnestly in her face.

"I see how it is," cried Aunt Patty, patting her favorite's golden head. "I will try not to be tedious—but you must remember that I am old, and the thoughts of the old must follow a beaten track. There is no use in telling you that Captain Lynmore and Grace loved each other—for you know that already, and perhaps you know by this time, that Neely was envious of her, and wanted to marry him herself. She stood in the way of their happiness, as if by keeping them apart, she could bring him nearer to herself."

"One evening, just as the sun went down, Grace drew me with her down to the bottom of the garden, where there was a nice seat under a chestnut tree, and there we sat down together. I saw she looked troubled and pale. You can't think how pretty she looked with her short hair, kinking up at the ends."

"Patty," says she, twisting the chestnut leaves into little queer shapes—"I never shall be happy though *he* loves me better than life. Neely will not let me be happy. If I marry him, she will be miserable. No, I must give him up: I should die under such withering looks as she casts upon me."

"Now, I don't know how the idea came into my head, but it seemed to me, that I was moved to say something for her good, that I had never thought of before. I couldn't bear to see such a sweet, pretty young creature sacrificing herself so."

"You have a right to do as you please with yourself," says I, "but I don't think you ought to sacrifice him. He saved your life, and sets all the world by you. He don't love your sister, and you can't make him love her. So if you give him up, you will make three miserable people, instead of one. I don't think the Lord will be pleased with such doings."

"Oh Patty, I did not look upon it in this light before. It would indeed be an ungrateful return for all he has done

for me. Surely, surely I have no right, as you say, to make him wretched."

She had hardly done speaking when Captain Lynmore himself came walking up, with his left hand in a sling, which only made him look more interesting. He sat down close to Grace, and began to play with the leaves she held in her hand. I thought I was not wanted, and stole away so softly, they never knew it. They never came in till the moon rose, and turned every thing into silver all round them. I knew by their looks that all was settled between them, and after a while, he came up to me, and told me in a low voice, that he was the happiest man in the world, and that he owed it all to me. I saw Neely leave the room, a few minutes after, with that same dark, strange countenance. Well, they married before the end of the summer, and traveled way off into a foreign land. They sent me the beautifullest silk dress you ever did see, and a gold ring besides. I have never seen them since, but I heard Neely was an old maid, with all her beauty. Oh! how time flies. Mrs. Delville is dead, strangers live there now. The old chestnut tree is fallen to the ground, and the garden walks, I suppose, all overgrown with grass. Sure enough, darling, we have no continuing city here. But, praise the Lord, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THE RED VELVET BODICE

"WHAT is that, Aunt Patty?"

"A little scrap of red silk velvet, child. I can hardly tell you what tender feelings come over me as I look upon it. It brings up before me a little fairy-like looking figure, not much larger than you are now, only a speck or so taller. How well I remember the time when I first seen her, dressed out in this velvet bodice, with a white muslin skirt flowing below it, so easy."

"Tell me all about it, Aunt Patty," said Estelle, with her eager, earnest look of curiosity, which ever proved irresistible. "I never saw any one that had such a store-house of pleasant memories as you have. It seems to me that you know the history of everybody that you ever met with—the heart history, and that is so much better than the mere outside story, you know. What made every body tell you every thing that they thought and felt, Aunt Patty? Were they not afraid you might tell it again? Oh! I know the reason. You are so good and unselfish, so different from other people, it is a comfort to talk to you, just as I do myself. There are a thousand little things that I don't like to speak about, even to my own mother, that I am not afraid to tell you. You look as if it was a favor to yourself to be allowed to listen to us."

"And so it is, darling. Just imagine what I would be, if I interested myself only in my own concerns, a poor, lone, childless creature, like me. Now, by going out of myself, as it were, and entering into other people's hearts, I can appropriate to myself their beauty, and worth, and property, and be as happy for the time as they are themselves."

"Tell me how you do it, Aunt Patty."

"I don't do any thing, child. I only feel; blessed be God, for the gift of a feeling heart. A great mind is a glorious gift, too. At least I think it must be, but if I can't have but one, I would rather possess the first a great deal, for we don't love people so much for their minds as their hearts. We admire them, to be sure, and look up, and wonder, but my poor neck can't stretch its chords much by upward looking, and I suppose that is the reason I like the easiest feeling best."

"But I would like to have both, Aunt Patty. I would like to have a great and noble mind, so great and noble that the whole world should hear of it, and almost feel afraid of my name, it would be so very famous; and then, I would like to have so kind and tender a heart, that every body would love me too much to fear me, and forget I was great, because I was so good."

Estelle spoke with energy, and mind and heart seemed indeed struggling for mastery in her childish, but intelligent face.

"And what else, my darling, would you like? Would you stop short there? Isn't there something wanting to put a kind of crown on all this?"

"Oh! yes, Aunt Patty. I would like to have a spirit pure and holy, filled to running over with the love of God, caring for nothing so much as to please Him, and oblige Him. And then, you know, I could use my great mind to glorify Him, and my good heart to make my fellow-creatures happy. There is no harm in such kind of ambition, is there, Aunt Patty?"

Aunt Patty laid her palsied hand in silent blessing on the head of her blooming favorite. She tried very hard to swallow down her feelings, before she found voice to speak.

"When you was a little thing, Estelle, I feared you wouldn't live to grow up, because you were smarter than other children, and then I used to have strange dreams about you, that I thought were warnings. Now, I begin to think the Lord will spare you to be a burning and a shining light to other generations. But stop, little one. Don't pull that scrap of velvet to pieces. There isn't much of it, any way, but it is big enough to remind

me of the precious little soul whose body was encased in the crimson bodice."

Estelle leaned on her right elbow, in her usual listening attitude, and her eyes said as plainly as tongue could speak it, "Well, I am ready to hear it."

"It isn't much of a story, child. I am afraid you will not like what I have to say, half as well as the one about the purple satin, or the pea-green taffeta, but I love this little scrap the best of all, because I loved the wearer best." You remember how your father went to the south, the spring before he died, and how your sister Emma went there for her health, for she was mighty poorly before she married Mr. Selwyn. Well, you know your aunt Woodville married a rich southern gentleman, and lives on a great southern plantation, and has ever so many negroes. You have heard Emma talk about them a hundred times. Before you was old enough to remember, Mrs. Woodville came on to the North, to see your mother, my niece Emma that was—and brought with her a young lady by the name of Nora Shirland. When we heard that she was coming, we felt a little uneasy, fearing she would not enjoy herself, as they have so many to wait upon them at the South, and live so differently. We thought our simple ways wouldn't suit her, and really wished your aunt was coming by herself.

I never shall forget the first time I saw Nora. We were all watching for your aunt, for she had written to us the day she expected to arrive, and we kept looking and looking till the sun was nearly down. At length a carriage stopped at the door, and your aunt Woodville, a fine, tall, handsome lady, got out first, and then came a little bit of a creature, with a drab-colored traveling dress, fitting her as nice as wax, and a neat straw bonnet, trimmed with blue lustring ribbon, and a sweet, pleasant, smiling countenance, that seemed to ask every body to love her, and promised to love every body in return. She didn't look one bit proud or grand, and she hadn't been in the house five minutes before we all felt as if we had known her all our lives. It was in the beginning of summer, and my niece Emma always did have the prettiest roses and pinks in her garden I ever did see anywhere, and Nora ran about among the flowers, with Edmund,

who was a little boy then, and Emma, who though weak and sickly, was a pert and sprightly child. She took to Norah mightily, and used to string pinks and wind them round a sprig of camomile, and make nosegays for her every day. Norah always said they were beautiful, though I knew the flowers she had at home were ten thousand times prettier than any of ours. She used to call me Aunt Patty, just as you do, and would spend hour after hour in looking over my scraps, and making me tell her about this one and that one, making believe as if she could never get tired, but I knew all the time she did it more to please me than herself.

At first the ladies were shy of calling to see her, thinking she might put on airs and think herself above them, but after a while, they couldn't come often enough, or the gentlemen either. Without seeming to take a bit of pains, she could entertain just as many as there happened to be, and though she was mighty fond of talking herself, she always let every one else have a chance. You never saw any one so well pleased with every thing as she seemed to be, and many's the time I've heard her say, clapping her hands in a kind of earnest way she had, all her own :

"Oh! I would so like to live at the North. Every thing is so nice and comfortable, here. The grass is so green, and the water's so pure, and the air is so fresh, and makes one feel so lively."

"Nothing would please us more than to have you compliment our young gentlemen so much as to let one of them induce you to remain," said your mother, smiling on her.

"Oh!" says Mrs. Woodville, shaking her head. "Nora is the hardest child to please you ever did see. There ain't a young man at the South that can make her like his name better than her own, though many a one has tried it. I should be very glad if Mr. Elmwood could have better luck."

Now, Mr. Elmwood was a gentleman, who was mighty intimate with your father, and always visited at our house oftener than anywhere else. He was a lawyer, and knew all the sciences by heart; and when he walked the street, he seemed to be in a brown study. He wasn't a

young man, but somehow or other, no one thought of calling him an old bachelor. I suppose it was because he was so different from most all the other men, who wanted to pass themselves off for young beaux. I never saw him so pleased with any one as he was with Nora. You would have thought, to hear them talk, that she knew as much about the sciences and the arts as he did, though she did not make any parade of her learning. Then, again, when she talked with the children, she seemed as much a child as the simplest of them.

"Nora, my dear," says Mrs. Woodville, late one day, "what do you think of Mr. Elmwood? How does he compare with your Southern gentlemen?"

"Oh! I like him exceedingly," says she, her face smiling all over, it looked so bright, "and I don't think he would suffer by comparison with anybody. He is so intelligent, agreeable, and seems to have such a generous and noble heart."

"Do you think you would be willing to marry him, Nora?" says Mrs. Woodville, with a knowing look.

"I wish you would not want to turn every friend into a lover," says Nora, blushing. "We are the best friends in the world, and mean to stay so, if you will only let us. I don't believe he thinks of it any more than I do. I should be so sorry if he heard any such remark."

"Well," says I, "Miss Nora, I never heard a young lady talk so sensible about gentlemen before. I don't see why they can't be friends as well as lovers, and stay so, too. If all the girls would set as much store by themselves, and not be in such a hurry to get married, the young men wouldn't be half so vain and foolish. They think they have only to pick and choose, and you can't make them believe anybody is an old maid from choice, to save their lives."

"I shall make them *know* so, one of these days," says Nora, laughing, "for I never will marry unless I love with my whole heart, and soul, and mind and strength. And I fear the man lives not, who can draw forth my latent energies of passion. I am so happy as I am," continued she, all in a glow of earnestness, "so happy at home, my own dear home, I have not one wish to leave it,

till I am called to that better home, where love eternal reigns."

She looked up as she said this, and I saw a tear sparkling in her clear blue eye. It made us all feel solemn, and nobody said any thing more to her about Mr. Elmwood. He came as usual, at night, and she talked to him just as easy as ever. Now, some girls are so silly, if they have been teased about a gentleman, they can't be in his company afterward without blushing and simpering, and acting awkward. But Nora had the best sense of any young lady I ever saw; and Mr. Elmwood thought so, too. He never seemed to care for ladies before, any more than if he was the man in the moon. Though as he was thought to have an independent property, and was sensible and not bad looking, he might have had a good chance to get married if he had wanted to.

"Now, darling, I see you are thinking about the red velvet bodice. Never mind; I'm coming to it presently in my roundabout way."

Aunt Patty rapped the lid of her golden snuff-box, and called up a large pinch of snuff, which seemed to have a reviving influence on her faculties, for when Estella reminded her of Nora Shirland, and the Red Velvet Bodice, a more than usual gleam of animation kindled in her faded eyes.

"Ah! yes," said she. Nora was a blessed little creature, and I love to dwell upon the time when she was among us, lighting us all up, just like summer sunshine. She was so different from what we thought Southern girls were, she didn't want any waiting on in the world; and instead of lying in bed till noon, as I've heard say they do, she was up with the lark, and out among the dews of the morning. She was smarter and more industrious than half the Northern girls, though they think the ladies at the South do nothing but sit and be fanned with big bunches of peacock's feathers the live long day. Mr. Elmwood got so, that it seemed he couldn't go nowhere else, but just where she was. He used to come most every night, as steady as the clock struck the hours, and no matter how folks were seated when he came, he was sure to get close to her, in a little time.

One night, and I never did see him look so bright and

pert before, he waited upon her to a party that was given to her by one of our near neighbors. After she was dressed, and it never took her long to fix herself, though she always looked as nice as a new-bound Psalm book, she came into my room for me to see her.

"I couldn't think of going, Aunt Patty," says she, giving a little flourish of her hands, so natural to her, "without knowing if you approved my looks or not. How do you like my bodice? Do you think it looks too fine? If it does, I will take it off, and wear something more simple."

"Bless your heart," says I, "I wouldn't have you take it off on no account, it looks so nice and pretty. It fits you off like a London doll. I wonder what Mr. Elmwood will say to it."

"Don't, Aunt Patty," says she, "I want you all to understand that we are friends, the very best friends in the world, nothing more."

"I think Nora will like Mr. St. Leger," says Mrs. Worth, my niece Emma, who stepped in a few moments before. They say he is just returned from Europe, and will be there to-night. He is the pride and boast of our town. I am very glad he is come back time enough for you to see him!"

"Is he very tall?" says Nora, laughing, "and has he fine black eyes, and very graceful manners?"

"Why you must have seen him," says my niece Emma. "He is all that and more."

"I have seen him often in my mind's eye," say Nora. She began with a smile, but a sort of a pensive shade settled on her face before she stopped.

Aunt Patty stopped, for Mrs. Worth opened the door, and with her usual quiet, gentle tread, approached the table on which her venerable aunt leaned her palsied arm.

"Emma," said Aunt Patty, "I am glad you have come in, just at this moment. I'm telling Estelle about Nora Shirland. You recollect when she first met Mr. St. Leger, the night she wore her red silk velvet bodice, with a white muslin skirt, looking so sweet and modest. Here is a little scrap of it that I keep as choice as gold dust. Now as I wasn't at that party, I can't say any thing

about it. You take up the story now and finish it. Estelle will be glad enough to hear it from you, instead of poor, prosy Aunt Patty."

"Oh! no," exclaimed Estelle, "but it would be a rarity to hear mother tell a story. Nobody reads aloud as sweetly as she does."

"Estelle alway knew how to flatter a little," said her mother, her soft gray eyes turning upon her with a look of the tenderest affection.

"Nora Shirland was indeed a lovely girl, and the summer she passed with us was one of the most delightful seasons of my life. Yes, I remember that evening, Aunt Patty, well. I was anxious Norah should enjoy herself, and bear away with her a pleasing remembrance of our northern social gatherings. I wanted that she should see Mr. St. Leger, and that he should see our Southern favorite. I had penetration enough to perceive that Mr. Elmwood would never be to her more than a devoted friend, and that if some one did not make a deeper impression, there was no prospect of our transplanting her to the bowers of the North.

"When Mr. St. Leger made his appearance, we were all grouped about the piazza, in the moonlight; for it was a clear, summer night, and the rooms were rather small. As Mr. St. Leger walked up the gravel avenue that led to the door, his tall and finely-formed figure towered in the moonlight and made all those around appear very insignificant. There was something in his air and manner that commanded respect and admiration, and I think he had the handsomest face I ever saw. I looked at Nora, who was conversing with Mr. Elmwood, and I was sure I saw a sudden glow on her cheek, which reddened still more, when the lady of the house brought up Mr. St. Leger, and introduced him. He addressed her with grace and politeness; but there was an air of reserve about him, which seemed to affect chillingly the warm-hearted Southern girl. She did not speak with her usual ease and animation; and when they separated and mingled with the rest of the company, I have no doubt it was a feeling of mutual disappointment. I learned afterward that every one had been praising Nora to him, and prophesying that she would captivate him, and with the

natural pride of men, he resisted the coercion of the will of others. He had seen too much of the world, been too much flattered and admired, not to have a good deal of self-appreciation, and Nora had her share too.

"I could not help being pleased when I saw him draw near the piano when Nora was singing, and stand with folded arms, in perfect silence, listening to her songs. She sang with great sweetness and taste, and the soul of music breathed from her voice. When she had finished, and rose from the piano, every one urged her for another song. Mr. St. Leger would sing with her—they said he was one of the most delightful singers in the world. She looked up to him involuntarily, with all the music of her soul beaming in her eye—and I firmly believe that one glance thawed the ice of reserve that had imparted such coldness to his first greeting. His fine dark eye responded: and, turning over the leaves of a music book, he waited her selection. He had one of the richest, most mellow, charming voices I ever heard, and it harmonized delightfully with her own. She looked excited and happy; but she was too polite to monopolize the instrument, and soon gave place to others. After that, I saw her walking and talking with St. Leger, whose lofty figure was compelled to bend down, to find himself within reach of her gentle, though animated tones. I love to see such a contrast. The upward-looking, delicate woman; the strong, protecting, sheltering arm."

"I told you, darling, that I could not tell a story as your mother can," said Aunt Patty, nodding approvingly. "I talk in my old-fashioned way, and every thing sounds alike, but though she doesn't say any thing very particular or new, she makes a great deal more of it than I could do."

"Aunt Patty knows she has got her name up," said Mrs. Worth, smiling, "or she would not depreciate her own talents. She has long been considered the queen of story-tellers, and is too secure of her dominion to fear any usurpation on my part. I am now only recalling some of the pleasant memories of the heart."

"Tell, Estelle, about the ruining of the velvet bodice, and how like a little angel Nora bore it," said Aunt Patty.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Worth, "all young girls might profit by the example of Nora's gentleness and forbearance. In all country parties there are necessarily some invited for courtesy's sake, who seem to have no legitimate claim of their own. There was a very clumsy, coarse, would-be fine girl there, about three times as large as Nora, who, taking a great fancy to her velvet bodice, sent the next day to borrow it for a pattern. Knowing her so well, I begged her not to lend it, certain she would try it on, and spoil it."

"I would not appear disobliging or proud, for any consideration," said Nora, with a sweet compliance. "I presume it will add to her happiness to have a bodice like mine, and I cannot refuse so small a favor."

The next day, toward sun-down, we were all sitting in the front room, and Mr. St. Leger and Mr. Elmwood were both there, and Nora found no more difficulty in entertaining one, than the other, though I could see that when Mr. St Leger addressed her, her countenance lighted up with an expression I had never seen in it before. It was such a kindling, glowing countenance, it would be difficult to describe.

While we were all engaged in the most delightful conversation, a little coarse, red-faced girl entered the parlor, without any announcement, and staring at every face, walked up to Nora, exclaiming, "I guess this is the one." She had a bundle in her hand tied up in a soiled and rumpled napkin, which she swung round her fingers with fierce velocity.

"Here's your jacket," said she, sticking the bundle in Nora's face, who, perfectly astonished, suffered it to drop in her lap. "Sister says she's sorry she burst it, but it is too little for her any how. She's mended it the best she could, and says she's much obliged to you."

The child made an awkward attempt at a courtesy, and marched out of the room, leaving me excessively mortified that so uncommonly rude a specimen of country breeding should have exhibited itself to Nora at that moment. The poorest children in our neighborhood were, with few exceptions, polite and well-bred. As the bundle fell in her lap, it loosened, and the bodice was exposed to view. Nora clasped her hands, looked surprised and

serious one moment, then burst into a natural laugh of perfect good humor.

"*Ichabod*," she cried, holding up the bodice, every seam of which was distinguished by a streak of the white lining, violently exposed. A dark stain also disfigured one of the most conspicuous parts—in short, it was completely ruined. I saw that Mr. St. Leger watched her countenance with earnest curiosity.

Mrs. Worth resumed her narrative. It would be difficult to tell which was the most attentive auditor, Estelle or Aunt Patty.

I do not believe that it is possible for a young lady to have a favorite article of dress, carelessly, irretrievably ruined, without feeling considerable regret; but it is certain Nora manifested no anger or vexation.

"This is one of the disadvantages of being small," said she, folding up the unfortunate bodice, and laying it on one side; "if I was only of a reasonable size, this would not have happened."

"Do you really forgive the author of this calamity?" asked St. Leger.

"To be sure, I do," answered Nora, smiling.

"From your heart and soul?"

"From my heart and soul."

"I did not believe women capable of so much magnanimity."

"I am sorry you have so poor an opinion of our sex."

"He has been traveling in Europe," remarked Mr. Elmwood. "That accounts for it; besides, if he knew Miss Shirland as well as I do, he would be as much surprised at any want of magnanimity on her part, as he now is at its manifestation."

"Thank you, Mr. Elmwood," said Nora, emphatically; "I value your praises, because I do not deem them compliments."

"And you should value mine, because they *are compliments*," said St. Leger, smiling; "a gentleman never takes the trouble to compliment a lady whom he does not wish to please."

"As he believes that the only passport to her favor, it is natural he should make use of it," repeated Nora,

gravely, though there was an expression in her eye that satirized the language of her lips.

"How can you remember all they said, mother?" questioned Estelle.

I suppose it made a deeper impression on my mind, on account of my anxiety on the subject. I wanted Nora to marry a Northern gentleman and dwell among us. I was convinced that Mr. Elmwood was not a marrying man, and that he was satisfied with the warm, pure friendship that existed between them. I knew that St. Leger was fastidious and refined, and I feared that in my partial judgment, I exaggerated the winning qualities of Nora. I had penetration enough to perceive that the equanimity of temper she showed with regard to her ruined bodice filled him with admiration and respect. It was evident that his opinion of womankind was exalted. He was a keen observer, and those who shrunk from scrutiny, did well to avoid the glance of his dark and beaming eye. I thought as their acquaintance deepened into intimacy, that Nora avoided it, but not because she dreaded its spirit-reading power. Her heart was transparent, as its feelings were deep, like the waters of a still lake, on a clear, summer day.

Estelle smiled, and looked at Aunt Patty as much as to say, "Mother relates a story charmingly—does she not?" and Aunt Patty's nod responded, "You know I always was a prosy being, darling. My niece Emma used to scribble poetry, before she married Mr. Worth."

As the autumn drew near, continued Mrs. Worth, your Aunt Woodville commenced her preparations to return to the South. She shuddered at the idea of our cold Northern winters; but Nora said she longed for a merry sleigh ride, when the ground was covered with snow, and the moon made it, if possible, whiter still. We all begged her to remain and the children gathered round her, with tears, entreating her not to leave them.

"Perhaps I may return with the flowers of spring," said she, caressing them, "for dearly do I love this genial Northern home. I do not think, however, I could bear the rigors of your wintry season, with all my admiration of its snow, icicles and frost gems." She turned toward the window, and looked earnestly at the trees, which were

gilded here and there with a golden leaf, and here and there touched with flame. I thought she looked very sad, and I wondered if St. Leger had been awakening too deep an interest in her heart, without giving her his own in return. They had been thrown so much together, in social communion, there seemed such harmony of thought and feeling, it appeared impossible, that if their affections were disengaged, they should not meet and mingle.

"Niece," interrupted Aunt Patty, poising her knitting-needle, with a deliberate air, "are you not making it too much of a love story, for such a young thing as Estelle?"

"Oh! no," exclaimed Estelle, with blushing eagerness; "I like such stories better than any other. I understand them too."

I do not think there is any danger of the description of the attachment of two such beings as Nora and St. Leger, said Mrs. Worth, having any influence, but what is pure and good. Young as Estelle is, she is capable of sympathizing in the love which excellence inspires. That evening, when St. Leger came, the topic of conversation was the approaching departure of our friends. I watched his countenance, and was sure a change came over it, while Nora's color rose. It was not long before we missed them both. There is a very pleasant walk in front of our house, you know, by that avenue of poplar trees, which stretches beyond the garden. I saw glimpses of two figures walking back and forth, and back again very slowly. It was easy to distinguish the lofty form of St. Leger in his dress of black; and any body could tell who Nora was, so slight and airy she looked, in the clear starlight, in her white muslin robe and black scarf, making such a striking contrast. I think if I had counted the number of times they walked up and down that avenue, it could not have been less than a hundred. The children had long been in bed, Aunt Patty too, your Aunt Woodville retired to her chamber, and I remained alone in the parlor reading. Your father,—Mrs. Worth never could mention that name, without a glistening eye and a heaving bosom,—your father was absent from home, and though my eyes were on the book, my thoughts were wandering in pursuit of him. At length Nora entered alone.

She looked pale and agitated, and I saw her hands tremble, as she gathered the scarf more closely round her.

"Nora," I exclaimed, "you have been too long in the night air. You should not have done so."

She did not answer, but stepping quickly forward, threw her arms round me, and laying her head on my bosom, burst into tears. I felt strongly affected. Why should Nora weep? All my air-castles were then blown to the ground, and I too wept over their ruins. In a few moments Nora raised her head and wiped away her tears.

"I am so foolish," she cried; "but I could not help it, my heart was so full. Dear Mrs. Worth, I am so happy."

"Happy, Nora!" a mass of lead was lifted from my spirits. They rebounded at once.

"Oh yes, so happy, I have no language to express my boundless contentment. That is the right word, for I ask no more than just the blessing gained. You understand me, do you not, my own dear friend?"

"I think—I know I do," replied I, embracing her with deep emotion. "You have gained the heart of St. Leger; you have given him your own in return. There are not many such hearts, Nora. Oh! you do well to prize it."

"I am not so happy that I have won his heart, priceless as I deem it," replied Nora, with enthusiasm, "as that I have given my own; oh! there is far more happiness in loving than in being loved. I began to fear that my twin-born soul had wandered so far from my peculiar sphere, our diverging paths would never meet in this world; sometimes my heart felt dull with the weight of its latent affections. I wondered why God had given me such capacities of loving without sending me a being to call them into exercise. The very first time I met St. Leger, the master chord of my heart vibrated, and I knew then it would vibrate forever. But not till this night was I assured that the impression was mutual, that I was loved as deeply and passionately as the wants of my nature require; oh! it is the realization of a life-long dream."

"God bless you, dear Nora," said I, "you deserve to be happy and you will be so. But will your parents consent to such a union? will they be willing to resign you?"

"They prize my happiness more than their own," she

replied earnestly; "besides, if I do marry Mr. St. Leger," and she blushed crimson, as she said it, "we will pass all our winters at the South, and only our summers here. Will not that be delightful?"

"But Mr. Elmwood!" I exclaimed.

"No one will rejoice more than himself in my prospective happiness. He is the most disinterested of human beings. He knows my whole heart and I all of his. If I were in sorrow and trial I would go to him for comfort. If I were deserted by all else, I would be sure of the fidelity of his friendship, the steadfastness of his regard."

In less than a fortnight your aunt Woodville left us, and took Nora with her. It seemed as if the sun were withdrawn from the sky, so much brightness vanished with her. But she came back as she had said with the flowers of spring, the happy wife of St. Leger I do believe she was happy if ever human being was; for her dream of love was fully realized. He was the type of all that is noble and glorious in man; she, all that is amiable and excellent in woman.

"Where do they live now, mother?" asked Estelle. "Have I ever seen them?"

"No, my dear; at first it was just as she had planned. They spent their summers at the North, their winters at the South; but she gradually drew him, without any exertion on her part, to dwell in her milder latitude. He loved the South; for the elements of his character are more congenial with it than the colder atmosphere of New England. He has a tropic nature, and accident only gave him a birth-place here. I correspond with Nora still. I will read you some of her letters, Estelle; they are the transcript of a true woman's heart."

"Thank you, mother; but did Mr. Elmwood marry?"

"No, my dear, he was born to be the friend of man and womankind, not to be limited to the domestic sphere."

"There are are some sensible men in the world," observed Aunt Patty; "and he is one."

THE SNOW FLAKES.

Ye're welcome, ye white and featnery flakes,
That fall like the blossoms the summer wind shakes
From the bending spray—Oh! say, do ye come,
With tidings to me, from my far distant home?

"Our home is above in the depths of the sky
In the hollow of God's own hand we lie—
We are fair, we are pure, *our* birth is divine—
Say, what can we know of thee, or of thine?"

I know that ye dwell in the kingdoms of air—
I know ye are heavenly, pure, and fair;
But oft have I seen ye, far travelers, roam,
By the cold blast driven, round my northern home.

"We roam over mountain, and valley, and sea,
We hang our pale wreaths on the leafless tree:
The herald of wisdom and mercy we go,
And perchance the far home of thy childhood we know.

"We roam, and our fairy track we leave,
While for nature a winding-sheet we wave—
A cold, white shroud that shall mantle the gloom,
Till her Maker recalls her to glory and bloom.

Oh! foam of the shoreless ocean above!
I know thou descendest in mercy and love:
All chill as thou art, yet benigh is thy birth,
As the dew that impearls the green bosom of Earth.

And I've thought as I've seen thy tremulous spray,
Soft curling like mist on the branches lay,
In bright relief on the dark blue sky,
That thou meltedst in grief when the sun came nigh.

"Say, whose is the harp whose echoing song
Breathes wild on the gale that wafts us along?

The moon, the flowers, the blossoming tree,
Wake the minstrel's lyre, they are brighter than we."

The flowers shed their fragrance, the moonbeams their light,
Over scenes never vail'd by your drap'ry of white;
But the clime where I first saw your downy flakes,
My own native clime is far dearer than all.

Oh! fair, when ye clothed in their wintry mail,
The elms that o'ershadow my home in the vale,
Like warriors they looked, as they bowed in the storm,
With the tossing plume and the towering form.

Ye fade, ye melt—I feel the warm breath
Of the redolent South o'er the desolate heath—
But tell me, ye vanishing pearls, where ye dwell,
When the dew-drops of Summer bespangle the dell?

"We fade,—we melt into crystalline spheres—
We weep, for we pass through a valley of tears;
But onward to glory—away to the sky—
In the hollow of God's own hand we lie."

THE SOLDIER'S BRIDE.

It was verging toward the evening of an autumnal day, in the year 1777. The forests began to assume the varied and magnificent tints peculiar to this season, in an American clime; those rich, brilliant dyes, which, like the hectic glow on the cheek of consumption, while it deepens the charm and the interest of beauty, is yet the herald of decay. The prevailing hue was still of a deep, unfaded green, but the woods were girdled by a band of mingled scarlet, green, and yellow, whose gorgeous, rainbow-like colors, might well be compared to the wampum belt of the Indian, tracing its bright outline on the darker groundwork of the aboriginal dress. These inimitable tints were reflected in that mirror, which the children of the forest denominated the *Silver Wave*, known to *us* by the more familiar but not less euphonious name of the *Ohio;* but its bosom was not then covered with those floating palaces which now, winged by vapor, glide in beauty and power over the conscious stream. The bark canoe of the savage, or the ruder craft of the boatman, alone disturbed the silence of the solitary water. On the opposite bank a rude fortification, constructed of fallen trees, rocks, and earth, over which the American flag displayed its waving stripes, denoted the existence of a military band, in a region as yet uncultivated and but partially explored. Toward this fort a canoe was rapidly gliding, whose motions were watched by the young commander, as he traversed the summit of the parapet, with a step which had long been regulated by the measured music of the "ear-piercing fife and spirit-stirring drum." The canoe approached the shore, and as Captain Stuart descended to receive his for-

est visitor, his eye, accustomed as it had been to the majestic lineaments of the savage chief, could not withhold its tribute of involuntary admiration, as they were now unfolded to him, invested with all the pomp which marked his warlike tribe. He was indeed a noble representative of that interesting, but now degenerate race, once the sole possessors and lordly dwellers of the wilderness, now despoiled and wandering fugitives from a land chartered to them by the direct bounty of Heaven. The gallant tuft of feathers which surmounted his swarthy brow, the wampum girdle which belted his waist, his deer-skin robe, ornamented with the stained ivory of the porcupine, corresponded well with the expression of his glittering eye, and the proportions of his martial limbs. From the lofty glance of that eye he had received the appellation of the Eagle; but the commander of the fort now hailed him by the name of Sakamaw, which simply signifies a chief.

"Brother," said Sakamaw, as he leaned with stately grace on his unstrung bow, "brother, will the pale man dwell in peace and friendship with the tribe of the Shawnees, or shall the eagle spread its wings to the shore that lies nearer the setting sun? The Mengwe have sworn to obey the white father, who lives far beyond the great Salt Lake. The wolf and the turtle have given their allegiance to him, and the serpent and the buffalo rise up against the pale tribe that are dwelling in our wilderness. Sakamaw, the friend of the white man, comes to warn him of the snare, to know if the Eagle shall curl his talons beneath his folded plumes, or arm them with the war-bolt that shall find the heart of his enemy?"

It was not without the deepest emotion that Captain Stuart heard this intelligence, that the British army had received such powerful and dreaded allies as these fierce and vindictive tribes. He felt that he occupied a perilous station, and notwithstanding the high trust he had always placed in Sakamaw, who was emphatically called the friend of the white man, as he looked upon the dark brow and giant frame of the Indian warrior, all that he had heard of the treachery and revenge of a sable race flashed upon his excited imagination. Captain Stuart was brave, but he was in arms against a foreign foe, who had stooped to the baseness of strengthening its power by

an alliance with the children of the wilderness, arming in its cause their wild, undisciplined passions, and adding all the horrors of border warfare to the desolation that hangs over the embattled field. He may be forgiven by the bravest, if for one moment his generous blood was chilled by the tidings, and suspicion darkened the glance which he turned on the imperturbable features of the Eagle chief.

"Young man," said the savage, pointing toward the river, whose current was there quickened and swollen by the tributary waters of the Kanawha, "as the *Silver Wave* rolls troubled there by the stream that murmurs in its bosom so does my blood chafe and foam when its course is ruffled by passion and revenge. Feel my veins—they are calm. Look on my bosom—it is bare. Count the beating of my heart, as it rises and falls, uncovered to the eye of the Master of life. Were Sakamaw about to do a treacherous deed he would fold his blanket over his breast, that he might hide from the Great Spirit's view the dark workings of his soul."

"Forgive me, noble chief!" exclaimed Stuart, extending his hand with military frankness and warmth, "I do not distrust you; you have come to us unweaponed, and we are armed; you are alone, and we have the strength of a garrison; and more than all, you warn us of treachery and hostility on the part of other tribes, and bring us offers of continued peace from your own. I cannot, I do not, doubt *your* faith; but as the rules of war require some pledge as a safeguard for honor, you will consent to remain awhile as hostage here, secure of all the respect which brave soldiers can tender to one, whose valor and worth has made the fame of this forest region."

Sakamaw assented to this proposal with proud, unhesitating dignity, and turned to follow the young officer, whose cheek burned through its soldierly brown as he made the proposition, which military discipline required, but which he feared might be deemed an insult by the high-minded savage. Sakamaw cast his eyes for a moment on the opposite shore, where it was immediately arrested, and his foot stayed in its ascent by the objects which there met his gaze. An Indian woman, leading by the hand a young boy of the same tawny hue, approached to

the water's side, and by impressive and appealing gestures, seemed to solicit his attention and compassion.

"Why does the doe and the fawn follow the panther's path?" muttered he to himself. "Why do they come where the dart of the hunter may pierce them, and leave the shelter of their own green shady bowers?"

He hesitated, as if resolving some doubts in his own mind, then springing into the canoe that lay beneath the bank on which he stood, he pushed it rapidly over the waters to the spot where they awaited him. Whether the dark shadow of future events cast its prophetic gloom before him, softening his heart for the reception of conjugal and parental love, I know not, but there was something mysteriously tender in the manner in which he departed from the coldness and reserve peculiar to his race, and embracing his wife and son, placed them in the light bark he had just quitted, and introduced them into the presence of Stuart, who had witnessed with surprised sensibility the unwonted scene. The sensations which then moved and interested him have been since embodied in lines whose truth the poet most eloquently felt:

> "Think not the heart in desert bred,
> To passion's softer touch is dead—
> Or that the shadowy skin contains
> No bright or animated veins—
> Where, though no blush its course betrays,
> The blood in all its wildness plays!"

"Sakamaw," said he, "you have decided well. Bring them to my cabin, and see how warm and true a welcome a soldier's wife can offer. The walls are rough, but they who share the warrior's and the hunter's lot, must not look for downy beds or dainty fare."

It was a novel and interesting scene, when the wife and son of the Indian chief were presented to the youthful bride of Stuart, who with generous, uncalculating ardor, had bound herself to a soldier's destiny, and followed him to a camp, where she was exposed to all the privations and dangers of a remote and isolated station. As she proffered her frank, yet bashful welcome, she could not withdraw her pleased and wondering gaze from the dark, but beautiful features of the savage; clothed in the peculiar

costume of her people, the symmetry of her figure, and the grace of her movements, gave a singular charm to the wild and gaudy attire. The refined eye of Augusta Stuart shrunk intuitively, for a moment, from the naked arms and uncovered neck of the Indian; but there was such an expression of redeeming modesty in her countenance, and her straight, glossy hair, falling in shining folds over her bosom, formed so rich a vail, the transient disgust was lost in undisguised admiration at the beauties of a form which a sculptor might have selected as a model for his art. The dark-haired daughter of the forest, to whose untutored sight the soldier's bride appeared fair and celestial as the inhabitant of a brighter sphere, returned her scrutinizing gaze with one of delighted awe. Her fair locks, which art had formed into waving curls on her brow, her snowy complexion and eyes of heavenly blue, beamed upon her with such transcendant loveliness, her feelings were constrained to utter themselves in words, as she had learned from her husband the language of the whites.

"Thou art fairer than the sun, when he shines upon the *Silver Wave*," exclaimed Lehella, such being the name of the beautiful savage. "I have seen the moon in her brightness, the flowers in their bloom, but neither the moon when she walks over the hills of night, nor the flowers when they open their leaves to the south wind, are so fair and lovely as thou, daughter of the land of snow."

The fair cheek of Augusta mantled with carnation, as the low, sweet voice of Lehella breathed forth this spontaneous tribute to her surpassing beauty. Accustomed to restrain the expression of her own feelings, she dared not avow the admiration which had, however, passed from her heart into her eyes, but she knew that praise to a child was most acceptable to a mother's ear, and passing her white hand over the jetty locks of the Indian boy, she directed the attention of her husband to the deep hazel of his sparkling eye, and the symmetrical outlines of a figure which bore a marked similitude to the chiseled representations of the infant Apollo. The young Adario, however, seemed not to appreciate the favors of his lovely hostess, and shrinking from her caressing hand, accompanied his father, who was conducted by Captain Stuart

to the place where he was to make his temporary abode. The romance, which gave a kind of exciting charm to the character of Augusta, had now found a legitimate object for its enthusiasm and warmth. By *romance*, I do not mean that sickly, morbid sensibility, which turns from the realities of life with indifference or disgust, yearning after strange and *hair-breadth* events—which looks on cold and unmoved, while *real* misery pines and weeps, and melts into liquid pearl at the image of *fictitious* wo—I mean that elevation of feeling which lifts one above the weeds of the valley and the dust and soil of earth—that sunny brightness of soul, which gilds the mist and the cloud, while it deepens the glory and bloom of existence—that all-pervading, life-giving, yet self-annihilating principle, which imparts its own light and energy to every thing around and about it, and animating all nature with its warmth and vitality, receives the indiscriminate bounties of heaven, the sunbeam, the gale, the dew and the flower, as ministers of individual joy and delight. Augusta had already begun to weave a fair vision for the future, in which the gentle Lehella was her pupil as well as her companion, learning *from* her the elegancies and refinements of civilized life, and imparting *to* her, something of her own wild and graceful originality. She witnessed with delight the artless expression of wonder the simple decorations of her rude apartment elicited from her untaught lips, for though in the bosom of the wilderness, and dwelling in a cabin constructed of the roughest materials, the hand of feminine taste had left its embellishing traces, wherever it had touched. Wild, autumnal flowers mingled their bloom and fragrance over the rustic window-frame; sketches of forest scenery adorned the unplastered walls, and a guitar lying on the table, showed that the fair mistress of this humble mansion had been accustomed to a more luxurious home, and more polished scenes. I cannot but linger for a moment here, for to me it is enchanted ground—a beautiful and accomplished woman, isolated from all the allurements of the world, far from the incense of adulation, and the seductions of pleasure, shedding the light of her loveliness on the bosom of wedded love, and offering the fresh and stainless blossoms of her affections on that shrine, which, next to the altar of God, is holiest in her

eyes. But I must turn to a darker spot, one which has left an ineffable stain in the annals of our domestic history, but which is associated with so many interesting events, I would fain rescue it from oblivion.

The next morning the garrison was a scene of confusion and horror. A party of soldiers had been absent during the evening on a hunting expedition, being a favorite recreation in the bright moonlight nights. When the morning drum rolled its warning thunder, and the hunters came not as wont to perform their military duties, a general feeling of surprise and alarm pervaded the fort. Gilmore, the next officer in rank to Stuart, had a very young brother in this expedition, and filled with fraternal anxiety, he collected another party, and endeavored to follow the steps of the fugitives. After hours of fruitless search, they discovered a fatal signal, which guided their path, blood staining the herbage on which they trod, and plunging deeper into the forest, they found the murdered bodies of the victims, all bearing recent traces of the deadly scalping knife. The soldiers gazed on the mangled and disfigured remains of their late gallant comrades with consternation and dismay, when Gilmore, rousing from their stunning influence, rushed forward, and raising the body of his youthful brother in his arms, defaced and bleeding as it was, he swore a terrible oath, that for every drop of blood that had been spilled, Heaven should give him vengeance. The other soldiers, who had neither brother nor kindred among the ghastly slain, shrunk with instinctive loathing from their gory clay, but breathing imprecations against the savage murderers, they followed the steps of Gilmore, who, weighed as he was by his lifeless burden, with rapid and unfaltering course approached the fort.

"Behold!" cried he to Stuart, who recoiled in sudden horror at the spectacle thus offered to his view, "behold!" and his voice was fearful in its deep and smothered tones, "had he been a man—but a boy, committed to my charge with the prayers and tears of a doating father—the Benjamin of his old age—oh! by the shed blood of innocence and youth—by the white locks of age, I swear—to avenge his death on the whole of that vindictive race, who thus dare to deface the image of their Maker—my poor, poor

brother!"—and the rough soldier, overcome by the agony of his grief, deposited the mangled body in the ground, and throwing himself prostrate by its side, "lifted up his voice and wept aloud." The manly heart of Stuart was deeply affected by this awful catastrophe, and the violent emotion it had excited in one of the most intrepid of their band. That the treacherous deed had been committed by one of those tribes, of whose hostility Sakamaw had warned him, he could not doubt; and he looked forward with dark forebodings to the stormy warfare that must ensue such bold and daring outrage. He turned toward Augusta, who, pale with terror, stood with her Indian friend, somewhat aloof from the dark-browed group that surrounded the mourner and the mourned, and the thought, that even the arm of love, "stronger than death," might not be able to shield *her* from the ravages of such an enemy, froze for a moment the very life-blood in his veins. Sakamaw was no unmoved spectator of the scene we have described; but whatever were his internal emotions, his features remained cold and calm as the chisled bronze they resembled. He saw many a fierce and lowering glance directed toward him, but like lightning on the same impassive surface, neither kindling nor impressing, they played around the stately form of the eagle chief.

"White warrior," said he, advancing nearer to Stuart, in the midst of the excited soldiers, "the Serpent has coiled himself in the brake, to sting at the midnight hour. The Wolf has lurked in ambush, and his fangs are dripping with the blood of the young. But the Eagle soars in the noontide beam, and hurls the thunderbolt in the face of his foe. His children are guiltless of the innocent blood."

While Sakamaw was speaking, there was a sullen murmur of discontent among the soldiers—the low growl that harbingers the tempest's wrath. Gilmore, too, rose from his recumbent position, and stood with clenched hands, shut teeth, ashy lips, and eyes that burned red and malignant through tears that the heat of revenge were now drying ere they fell. There is nothing so exasperating to one inflamed by hot and contending passions, as the sight of stoic indifference or perfect self-control. As the waters chafe and foam against the moveless cliff, that

stands in "*unblenched majesty*" in the midst of the raving element; the tide of human passion rages most violently when most calmly opposed.

"Dog of an Indian!" muttered Gilmore, "painted hypocrite! fiend of subtlety and guile! How dare you come hither with your vain, boasting words, honey on your lips and gall and bitterness in your heart? By the all-beholding heavens! you shall answer for every drop of blood spilled last night, by your own hand, or by the hands of your hellish tribe!"

"Gilmore, Gilmore!" exclaimed Stuart, in a tone of deep command, "you are worse than mad. Respect the laws of military honor, nor dare to insult one who has voluntarily surrendered himself as a hostage for his tribe. This chief is under my protection, under the guard and protection of every noble and honorable heart. Look upon him, he is unarmed, yet with generous trust and confidence he has entered the white man's camp to warn him of the very outrages over which we now mourn. Gilmore, be a man, be a soldier, and command our sympathy not our indignation."

The voice of the young commander, which had been wont to suppress every expression of mutiny or discontent by its slightest tones, now made an appeal as vain as it was just. "Down with the red dog! down with him, Gilmore!" burst forth and echoed on every side. Again did Stuart raise his commanding voice, till it rose high and clear as the sound of the bugle's blast. He was answered by the same rebellious and daring shouts. Lehella, who had looked on in wild, undefinable alarm, now comprehended the full extent of the danger which hung over the devoted Sakamaw, and rushing through the lawless band, she wreathed her slender arms around his majestic frame in the unavailing hope of shielding him from their rage.

"Fly, Sakamaw, fly!" she exclaimed, "the deer is not swifter than the foot of the hunter. Fly with Adario, from the home of the pale man. There is death in his gleaming eye."

"Sakamaw will never fly from the face of his foe. The Great Spirit is looking down upon my heart, and he sees it is white of the blood of the brave." As the noble savage

uttered these words, he looked up into the deep blue heavens, and drew back the deer-skin robe from his breast, as if inviting the scrutiny of the All-seeing to the recesses of his naked heart. It would seem that,

> "If heaven had not some hand
> In this dark deed,"

such magnanimous sentiments would have arrested the course of their revenge, but they were blind, and deaf, and infuriated. Gilmore felt in his bosom for the pistol which he carried for his own safeguard. Augusta saw the motion, which was unperceived by Stuart, who was endeavoring to stem the torrent swelling around him; with an irresistible impulse she pressed forward, and seized his arm at the very moment it was extended toward his victim. The motion and the report of the pistol were simultaneous. The angel of mercy was too late—the death-shot pierced the bosom of Sakamaw, and the faithful breast that had vainly interposed itself between him and the impending blow. They fell—the forest oak and the caressing vine—blasted by the avenging stroke, and the pause that succeeds the thunder's crash is not more awful than that which followed the deadly deed.

"Great God!" exclaimed Stuart, "what have you done? All the rivers of the West cannot wash out this foul stain." With feelings of bitter agony he knelt by the side of the dying chieftain and his martyred wife.

"Sakamaw," he cried, "friend, brother of the white man, speak, if you have breath to utter, and say you believe me guiltless of this crime—would that I had died ere I beheld this hour."

The expiring Indian opened, for the last time, that eye which had been to his tribe a lamp in peace and a torch in war, but the eagle glance was quenched in the mists of death. Twice he endeavored to speak, but the word "*Adario*," was all that was articulate.

"Yes, Sakamaw," he cried, I will be a friend to thy boy through life; in death I will cherish him."

Who can fathom the depth, the strength of a mother's love? Lehella, who had lain apparently lifeless on the bosom of Sakamaw, while Augusta, with bloodless cheeks

and lips, hung weeping o'er her, seemed to arouse from the lethargy of death, at the name of her son. She raised her cold cheek from its bloody pillow, and joining together her hands, already damp with the dews of dissolution, exclaimed in a voice unutterably solemn, while she lifted her dim and unwavering glance to heaven, "*Oh, thou Everywhere, protect my son!*"*

With this sublime adjuration to the Omnipotent Spirit of the universe, her soul made its transit, and Stuart and Augusta were left kneeling on either side of the dead bodies of the martyred Indians.

It is painful to record a deed which must forever stain the annals of American history; but now, while we glow with indignation at the tale of Indian barbarities on the frontiers of the West, let us remember the story of their past wrongs—let us think of the fate of the magnanimous Sakamaw, whose memory,

> "In long after years,
> Should kindle our blushes and waken our tears."

* * * * * *

Years rolled on. The wilderness began to blossom "like the rose," and the *solitary places* to look joyous with life and bright with promise; while on the fair banks of the Ohio the inhabited village, the busy town, or the prouder city, rose in beauty and imitative splendor. It was where the *father of ancient waters* flows on in all the opulence of its waves, still deep in the bosom of the wilderness, an isolated cabin reared its head through thick clusters of o'ershadowing vines and perennial trees. The moon showered down its virgin rays on the woods, the waters, the peaceful cottage, the rustling trees—and lingered in brightness round two solitary figures reclining on the bank, watching the course of the swelling stream. Its pallid beams revealed the features of a man, who had passed life's vernal season, and was verging toward the autumnal gray; but though the lines of deep thought or sorrow were distinctly marked on his pale brow, there was an air

* This impressive prayer was in reality breathed by a dying Indian mother.

of military dignity and command investing in his figure, which showed at once that his youth had been passed in the tented field. The other figure was that of a young man, in all the vigor of earliest manhood, in the simple dress of a forester, with the swarthy cheek, glittering eye and jet-black locks of the Indian race. As we do not aim at mystery in the development of this simple story, we will gather up in a few words the events of years, in whose silent flight the young and gallant Stuart had become the subdued and pensive moralist, who sat gazing on the brink of the stream; and Adario, the orphan boy of the murdered Sakamaw, the manly youth whose ardent yet *civilized* glance, reflected the gleams that shone fitfully round them. The young, the beautiful Augusta was now the dweller of "the dark and narrow house," and the widowed husband, disgusted with the world, retired still deeper into the shades of the West, with the child of his adoption, and one sweet inheritor of her mother's charms, who had been baptized by the soft name of Lehella, in memory of the mother of Adario. The only daughter, accompanied by a maternal friend, had for the first time visited the scenes of her parent's nativity, and it was to watch the boat which was to bring back the rose of the wilderness to the solitary bower that the father and Indian youth, night after night, lingered on the banks, catching the faintest sound which anticipation might convert into the ripple caused by the dipping oar. Restless and stormy unuttered feelings agitated the breast of Adario. Bred under the same roof, educated by the same enlightened and gifted mind, these children of the forest grew up together entwined in heart and soul, like two plants, whose roots are wreathed, and whose leaves and tendrils interlace each other in indissoluble wedlock. The son of Sakamaw, the daughter of Augusta—the dark and the fair—the eagle and the dove; it seemed to the sad and imaginative Stuart, that the spirit of the injured Sakamaw would rejoice in the land of ghosts, at the bond that should unite these descendants of their sundered tribes. Adario, tortured by jealousy and fear, awaited the return of Lehella, with all the fiery impatience peculiar to the dark nation from whom he derived his existence, though in *her* presence he was gentle and mild as the gentlest of

his sex, and all the harsher traits of the aboriginal character were softened and subdued, retaining only that dignity and elevation we can never deny is their own legitimate dower.

Though they had usually retired before the midnight hour, they remained this night longer, by a kind of mysterious sympathy and indefinable apprehension. Clouds gathered over the calm and silvered Heavens, and gradually deepening in darkness, wrapt the woods and waters in their solemn shadows. A low, sullen growl, broke at intervals on the silence of the night, and they looked up anxiously for the flash which was to be herald of another peal of the yet distant thunder. All was gloom above, and around; still the same sullen, murmuring sound, came more distinctly on the air, which was now damp with the laboring storm. At last, a light gleamed on the waters —bright, but still remote—and sent a long stream of radiance down the channel of the river, far as the spot where they were seated, gazing in a kind of fascination on the unwonted splendor. Louder and louder were those sullen murmurs, and deeper and brighter grew the ominous and lightning-like flashes that illumined the darkness of the wilderness. Onward it came, as if containing the principle of vitality in the fiery element that spread broader and fiercer around it—howling forth, as it came, those unearthly sounds, which to the ear of an untutored savage, would have seemed the angry thunders of the Manitou. Standing on the very brink of the river with breathless suspense, they watched the approach of the blazing phantom, when the father, whose perceptions became clearer as it neared, and who had heard of those wondrous fabrics, one of those noblest inventions of human genius, that propelled by vapor, triumph in speed over the majestic ship or the lighter bark, believed he now, for the first time, beheld one of these wonders of the waves, enveloped in a glory which was only the herald of its destruction. The thought of his daughter, that she might be exposed to the awful fate, wrapped in those volumed flames, came over him like a death-blast. At this moment wild shrieks and tumultuous cries were heard confusedly mingling with the hoarse thunders and plunging sound of the waters—figures became visible through the sheets of flame, wreathed with

blackening smoke, that reflected now their lurid brightness on the whole face of the sky. Suddenly a form burst through the blazing curtain, like an angel of light mid the regions of despair—it was but a glimpse of loveliness; but that one glimpse discovered the fair, far-waving locks, the snow-white brow, and beauteous outlines of the daughter of Stuart. They saw her stretch forth her virgin arms to the pitiless Heavens—then plunge through one devouring element into the cold embraces of another still as deadly. With one long, loud shriek of agony—the father and lover sprang from the shelving bank, and disappeared in the ignited waves!

The morning sun shone bright and clear on the blackened wreck of the *Evening Star*, the name of the devoted boat, and the waters flowed on calmly and majestically, as if they never echoed to the shrieks of the dying, or closed over the relics of human tenderness and love. The solitary cottage was still the abode of life, and youth, and hope. Adario and Lehella, redeemed from a fiery or a watery grave, were once more embosomed in its peaceful shades; but they were orphans. The river of the West was now the sepulchre of the gallant soldier. Lehella wept for her father—but she wept on the bosom of her lover; and she felt she was not alone.

It was a mysterious destiny that thus united the offspring of two hostile nations in the loneliness of Nature, the sacredness of love, and the holiness of religion—for Adario had learnt to worship the Christian's God. The memory of Sakamaw, the friend of the white man, is still hallowed in the traditions of the West; but many a traveler passes by the cottage of the wilderness, and gazes on its shaded image in the current that bears him along, unconscious that the son of the eagle chief, and the daughter of his brave defender, dwell within its secluded walls.

DE LARA'S BRIDE.

'Ere yet the curtain lifts its vailing fold,
Now o'er scenes of tragic art unroll'd,
The eye of hope this brilliant ring surveys,
And draws prophetic radiance from the gaze.
The third sad sister of the seraph choir,
Who wake the music of the deep-toned lyre,
This night, presiding genius of the Stage,
Has searched the hoarded treasures of an age.
Rich in the dearest memories of earth—
In chivalry, devotion, valor, worth—
She comes, with thorns upon her pallid brow,
Though thorns and sorrow lurk beneath their glow.
The passions follow darkly in her train,
Wild as the billows of the storm-swept main;
But reason, Nature vindicate their cause,
And conscience writhes o'er its insulted laws.
Who has not felt, when reeling o'er the verge,
Of crime to which temptations madly urge,
An antepast of that undying sting—
That quenchless fire, prepared for guilt's dread king;
And shrunk, as if the Lord's avenging wrath
Had placed upbraiding phantoms in their path?
To paint these agonies, to show the wreck
Of Mind's proud sovereignty when on the neck
Of unthroned reason Passion victor stands,
While pale Remorse in stealth its victim brands!
This is the empire of the heaven-born maid—
May no polluting steps or realms invade.
Never may that celestial fire, which erst
From Pindus' mount in flames of glory burst,
Descend to gild that scene where vice maintains
Its sorcery o'er the slave within its chains—
Where genius forms unholy league with fame,
And makes itself immortal by its *shame*.
Ye sons of Erudition! classic band!
Rulers of taste! in this unshackled land—

All that ye can, in candor, truth accord,
To this new candidate of fame award.
Man's own justice may relax its frown,
When woman aims to win the laurel crown.
Till now, the smiles of partial friends have warm'd
The germs of fancy, their fond love disarm'd
Relenting criticism—vail'd in mist
Each venial error. In the crowded list
Of Bards, adventurous champion now she waits,
As stood the fabled Sylph at Eden's gates,
Trembling to know if hers were that bright gift,
Of power the everlasting bars to lift.
Daughters of loveliness! we turn to you—
Stars of the arch, fair bending on the view;
'Tis yours to kindle that propitious beam
Whose visioned radiance gilds the poet's dream.
To you a sister, in the bard, appeals
For all that woman most devoutly feels,
Most dearly prizes—pure spontaneous praise.
Oh! when some unseen hand these folds shall raise
May some kind genius o'er the walls preside,
And more than welcome great *De Lara's Bride.*

THE

PREMATURE DECLARATION OF LOVE.

"Brother Tim—do pray be careful, and not brush the leaves of my orange trees so briskly; you always step so quick. Take care, don't tread on the hearth. It has been painted this morning, and is not yet dry. There, you have left a track; it is too late; but old bachelors never know what to do with themselves. They are always in the way."

"Nay, sister, you know I did not mean to do it; I was only trying to get out of the way of the orange leaves. As for being an old bachelor, I may be one, to be sure; but you know it would not be prudent for me to be otherwise."

Before I go on with the conversation, it may be well to introduce the readers to the speakers, as well as to some other members of the same family, who will be hereafter mentioned. Mrs. Butler, the lady, was one of the best wives, best mothers, and best neighbors in the world, according to oral fame, for which the village to which she belonged was notorious. Her house was the mirror of neatness and taste, but as her taste was kept in constant restraint by the unrelaxing parsimony of her husband, it was truly admirable to see the ingenuity with which she would make the "worse appear the better" thing. Their furniture was of the most ordinary kind, but no parlor looked more enticingly pretty than theirs; she always had so many tumblers of fresh blooming flowers on the sideboard, tables and mantel-piece, such luxuriant branches of evergreen in the chimney, and festoons of oak-leaves and woodbine around the white-washed walls. No one could tell what kind of frame the old looking-glass had, through the neat folds of the starched muslin that enveloped it, and no one would have imagined that the bright green

baize, that almost covered the carpet, showing only a handsome border, concealed the old, faded, worn-out relic of a prior generation. But to see Mrs. Butler in her pride, you must follow her into the garden, and a lovely garden it was. The wild-brier, the thorn, and the thistle may now choke the sweet blossoms which once bloomed profusely there, and the kind, active hand that planted and reared them be cold and powerless, but at the time which I speak it presented the fairest avenues of sweets I ever beheld. Rich exotics and tropical plants mingled their patrician odors and tints with the less valued but beauteous offspring of our own ruder latitudes. There were bowers within bowers; the yellow jassmine, with its bright golden blossoms and deep, shining, slender green leaves; the graceful clematis or virgin's bower, with its clusters of purple, melting into the softest blue; the multiflora, fairest, most modest of vines; the coral honeysuckle hanging its rich petals, as if of ocean-birth, amid the velvet verdure of the wreathing leaves; the magnificent trumpet-flower, looking like the very coronet of victory itself, and all the loving and lovely families of vines. Then there were tulips, and ionquils, and narcissuses, and hyacinths, and violets, and heart's-eases, and primroses, and snow-drops, and roses, and rosemaries, and all the sweet-smelling shrubs in the universe, from the fragrant clover to the aromatic calacanthus. Then fruit-trees and bushes of every description, even to the rare pomegranate, whose scarlet flowers glow so beautifully through the brilliant green of its foliage, giving promise of the scarlet and orange-colored fruit that is to succeed it. But there is no end to the beauties of this little world of Flora. I believe if I should write for a week without cessation I could not enumerate half its wonders or excellencies. So great was its fame, Mrs. Butler was almost obliged to live in it, and it was a pleasant life to her; whoever wanted herbs for medicinal beverage, savory and thyme for broth, sage for sausages, or wormwood for bruises, sent to Mrs. Butler; whoever desired a bouquet for a party, or flowers to ornament a mantel-piece, or a few nice figs or apricots for a friend, sent to Mrs. Butler; and let it be recorded to her honor, she never refused, though her plants and flowers were dear to her as her heart's blood. But we have kept the good

woman so long in her garden we forgot Brother Tim, whom we left in the dining-room, at a most respectful distance from the orange bush, and looking meekly and mournfully at the track his unfortunate foot had made on his sister's vermillion hearth. It must not be supposed, among Mrs. Butler's almost innumerable excellencies, she was not one of the best sister's in the world. The very perfection of her virtne in this relation rendered her constantly annoying to his peace, for she justly considered ridicule the most powerful instrument of attack, when the party in question is of a timid and self-distrustful character. If she did scold him for his *gaucheries*, it was in so good-natured a manner it passed for merely raillery with others, though he always answered her with a meekness and solemnity truly diverting. To see him married was the darling wish of her heart. She had a perfect horror of old bachelors. The comparisons she had so often heard drawn between them and a dry stalk, a blasted fig-tree, or a blossomless, fruitless shrub, were associated in her mind with such mournful images, she was determined, if possible, to avert such a misfortune as to have one of these useless cumberers of God's fair earth, entailed upon her otherwise flourishing family. What grievous mistakes good people sometimes make, out of the very abundance of activity of their benevolence. A cumberer of the earth!—useless! Never did there exist a more obliging, industrious, busy (there is a great difference between industrious and busy—a person may be industrious without our being conscious of it at the moment, whereas a busy one never escapes observation.) Mrs. Butler little knew how dependent she was upon the kind offices and indefatigable attentions of this humble, lonely brother of hers. Who turned the bobbin, made her lace frames, mended her broken china, and brought her the nearest wild flowers of the forest? Who stuffed the blue-bird, and little wren, and solemn owl that adorned her mantelpiece? Who but Brother Tim? Then the children—what could they do without him? He made their whistles, kites, and bows and arrows, dragged them in a little wagon manufactured by his own hands, made images of dog's and sheep's heads on the wall, and cried ba-a and bow-wow, to amuse the exacting monkeys. There was

nothing too much to ask of his inexhaustible good-nature, nothing too much for it to grant; yet such is the perverseness and ingratitude of our natures, his own sister, the very best woman in the village, compared him to the unprofitable weed that gives back no sweetness to the air, in return for its genial influence. I think I see him before me, with his meek, small countenance, his sleek, sparse, sandy locks, and thin, sharp blue-tipped nose, that gave an inexpressible air of forlornness to his face. It looked as if it were ill able to bear alone the bleak winds of this adverse world, and had already miserably shrunk from the contact—a voice seemed to issue from its very tip—"Oh! who would inhabit this bleak world alone?" Kind, honest-hearted Timothy Fuller—did merit meet on earth its just reward, did the pure in heart receive in this world the exalted rank they take in the beatitudes, thou wouldst have sat in the high places of thy country's glory; the richest sheaf in the harvest of moral excellence, to which inferior ones should bow down, as in Joseph's ancient dream. Never was guile or malice found on thy unoffending lips; they dropped the honey of human kindness as naturally and freely as the Arabian tree its medicinal gum. But I grow poetical in thy praises, and am forgetting other important personages in the drama of life, in which thou actedst thy noble part. Mr. Butler could never be overlooked by one who loves to study human nature, and to observe the various aspects the "mighty mother" assumes. Mr. Butler, the merchant, the deacon, the sheriff, the man of dollars and cents, of small gains and great savings, the cold, blue worshiper of Mammon, yet walking with such severe correctness none would dare to say he was not a sober, conscientious, upright Christian. He ground the poor for the last cent they owed him; and when, with a pale cheek and quivering lip, and long-drawn sigh, poverty put up the empty purse, and turned away from the merciless creditor, Mr. Butler would sigh too, and compress his narrow lips—fit opening for his narrow soul—and say, "It is hard, to be sure, to part with one's all; but then it is a debt, and my family must be supported; every body must take care of his own;" and the next Sunday at church he would sit in his long, sanctimonious, dark sur-

tout, and repeat to himself, while the pious minister was breathing forth his divine aspirations, "I thank heaven I am not as other men are, extortioners," &c., and lifting up his hard stony eyes, he believed all the worldly sins of the week effaced by the exemplary devotion of the seventh day. He did not enter into his wife's views, with respect to her brother, for he deemed him too simple to support a family himself; and that he would consequently bring an additional expense upon them. Mrs. Butler was too generous and uncalculating to reflect upon the future where her own interest was concerned, but she respected, perhaps I ought to say, *feared* her husband's prejudices, and always forebore in his presence to assail poor Tim in his "vital, vulnerable part." Her good genius was, nevertheless, constantly at work, and she was determined not to slacken her exertions, till she had brought about a matrimonial engagement between her brother and Miss Submit Schoolcraft, the amiable and unimpeachable spinster of the parish.

I was going to describe Miss Submit Schoolcraft or as her friends familiarly called her, Miss Mitty,—but as people are best known by their manners and conversation, and as I have already appropriated considerable time to the delineation of characters, when I only intended to speak of their actions, I will introduce her, and suffer her to ingratiate herself by her own undescribed attractions.

"Now this is very kind of you, Miss Mitty, to come and see me, without waiting to be sent for; take off your bonnet and sit here by the door, where it is cool, and you can see the flowers. Timothy, give my feather fan to Miss Mitty; don't you see how warm she looks? I didn't ask you to tread on my foot though, but old bachelors are always in the way."

"Sister, I am sure I didn't mean to do it," exclaimed the blushing Tim, extending the fan at arm's length to Miss Mitty, who sat with imperturbable composure, the warmth of the season glowing on a cheek which always wore the dry, unvarying bloom of the winter apple.

"Well, Miss Mitty," continued Mrs. Butler, "what scheme have you on hand for the good of others? You are always going about seeking out the sick and the afflicted; I don't know what we could do without you in

the village. You must not think of getting married, unless, and she glanced her good-natured eye at her brother, "unless some smart deserving bachelor——hem—."

Miss Mitty put her smooth cambric handkerchief to her face, and said she was very glad if she were able to do any good in the world; that time was short, and life uncertain, and a great many other pious, sensible remarks, which made a great impression on the amiable mind of Mrs. Butler, and made her more than ever anxious to secure so exemplary a helpmeet for brother. I am doing great injustice to Miss Mitty not to describe her person. To introduce a heroine without a description is unpardonable; I acknowledge my error, and hasten to correct it. Though evidently past the sunny bloom of youth, there was an air of freshness and vigor, a kind of evergreen verdure about her exceedingly becoming. Her complexion was not remarkable for its delicacy, but at a little distance, the starch or powder, with which she perfectly covered her face, might well pass for the lilies of nature. Her hair was of a faded flaxen, and combed back with severe precision from her brow, corresponded well with the plainness and neatness of a dress which was never known to be in disorder. Altogether, Miss Mitty was a very comely and personable young lady, and if skillful physiognomists could detect a certain air of self-complacency or self-righteousness in her countenance, who could blame her? Was she not the patroness of Sunday Schools and Charity Schools, the disseminator of Tracts, the presenter of subscription papers, the almoner of others' bounties, the *primum mobile* of the whole neighborhood? She had a kind of moral sagacity in finding out distressed objects, that was unequalled. She knew the history of every man, woman and child, within a dozen miles of the church. Did she hear of an intemperate man, who wasted his substance in riotous living, and impoverished the wife and children, he was bound to support, she neither slumbered nor slept, till she had made a visit to his house, and exhorted and sermonized him upon his neglected duties, and inevitable ruin. Did she hear of an idle, an improvident, or a slatternly woman, she immediately selected an appropriate Tract, begged for a comb and hair-brush, and cake of castile soap, and presented them to the delinquent

sister, with fitting words of counsel and warning. In short, she was a female St. Paul—"in season and out of season"—the unslumbering guardian of the morals and religion of the village of H———. But somehow or other, her unceasing exertions were not crowned with the success they merited. The drunkard resumed his burning draught, and breathed out a deeper curse against "preachers in bonnets, and idle busybodies." The slattern cast the unappreciated gifts aside, and "wished old maids would not be so meddlesome, and keep their advice till wanted or asked." This was all very ungrateful, but human nature is made up of strange inconsistencies. Perhaps it may be that charity, like religion, must be breathed in the still, small voice, that its influence must be as soft and unostentatious as the snow that falls unheard and almost unseen, upon its flaky sisters of the clouds, and then, like that gentle snow, when melted by the returning sun, it will sink, and moisten, and fertilize, till moral flowers spring forth in the spring-time of the heart. I will not now pause to penetrate into the mysteries of metaphysics, but Miss Mitty was certainly often called "*officious and troublesome*" when her back was turned, by the objects of her tender mercies, while more discerning individuals, like Mrs. Butler, inhaled with delight the odor of her sanctity, and marveled at her labors of love.

An hour passed away in edifying conversation between Mrs. Butler and her friend, with an occasional remark from Timothy, to which Miss Mitty listened with the most flattering attention, when supper was announced, and Mr. Butler, having transacted the business of the day, returned to take his accustomed seat at his wife's hospitable board. Yes, in spite of himself it was hospitable, and all who shared it felt the influence of her spirit. Mr. Butler's presence, however, was always a counteracter: to look upon him reminded one of a north-east storm. He never failed at table to discourse upon the virtues of temperance and the sin of gluttony and excess, particularly if he had any guests. Miss Mitty was always blest with a charming appetite, though she ate slowly, and took very small pieces at a time. Mr. Butler must have groaned in spirit at the innumerable *small pieces* that were slid in slow, regular progression on her plate. If he could have in-

vented a method by which people could live without eating, and consequently without much expense, he would have been the happiest man in the world. It was several evenings after this Mrs. Butler told her brother, he had an opportunity offered him of showing his kindness, goodness, and zeal; that Miss Mitty, who had been an indefatigable instrument in promoting the Sunday-school every Sunday afternoon, and who had already got it in a most prosperous way, was anxiously in search of a person who would open the school in a proper manner, with prayer and hymning. Mrs. Butler added—(I am afraid it was a spontaneous suggestion of her own)—that Miss Mitty knew of no one so well calculated as himself for that office, and that she would have made a personal application, had not modesty and propriety, &c., prevented her. Timothy blushed scarlet deep at the proposition, stammered out something about incapacity and prudence, got up and walked toward the door, casting a furtive glance at the looking-glass, thinking it possible Miss Mitty had taken a fancy to the cut of his face, and doing homage in his heart to her judgment and taste. Far be it from me to throw a shadow of ridicule upon these holy institutions which have been and continue to be the blessing of the land, or to speak lightly of that spirit of active benevolence and piety which, in imitation of man's divine exemplar, goes about doing good. But in sketching from real life we must take the evil with the good, the tares with the wheat. If Miss Mitty's high sense of duty and conscientious desire to be useful, was marred in its exercise by too much ostentation, and parade, and bustle, it surely is not my fault; I would not add one shade the more or one ray the less. I would portray Miss Mitty just as she is, or was, considering her perfect in her kind; and as for Timothy Fuller, my heart warms within me at the very recollection of his simple, confiding excellence. Behold him on the following Sabbath, in obedience to his sister's admonitions, winding his quiet way through the sweet, shaded path that led to the village church. It is a fair, warm, blue-skyed, soft-aired summer day. The birds sing their melodious hallelujahs amid the cool green boughs, and all nature reflects in peaceful loveliness the glorious smile of its Creator. Timothy feels the gracious influ-

ences around him. He is grateful for his being, grateful for his capacities for gratitude, and his opportunities for serving his great Task-master. The incense that arises from his heart is unadulterated with one particle of envy or vain-glory. He is dressed with unusual care, but that is rather his sister's doing than his own, who laid his buffest vest and whitest cravat on the toilet of his chamber, and ordered the servant to polish his boots till they resembled the brightest japan. Some one said they saw him looking at himself in one of his brass buttons, and smooth his hair over his forehead, before entering the door of the church, but I do not believe a word of it; he was no coxcomb.

The children were all arranged in the nicest order, and Miss Mitty was moving from class to class, as if she had the power of ubiquity. As soon as he entered she became stationary, and he felt that his presence was acknowledged. There was a half conscious, odd kind of expression in her countenance, followed by a look of deeper gravity, upon observing a saucy smile upon the lips of some of the urchins. Timothy saw the smile, and his bosom quaked; the horror of being laughed at, which every bashful person has experienced, came over him as a thick darkness. He had not realized before the magnitude of the office. From earliest childhood he had been accustomed to offer up his morning and evening sacrifices of prayer and praise, and to make melody with his lips unto Heaven. It had seemed to him in perspective an easy task to lift up his voice before untaught and uncriticising children, and a devout and kind-judging woman. But it was in vain to think of retracting, the ordeal must be past; so, opening his trembling lips, he began that sublime and simple petition, the first that infant innocence is taught to utter—"Our Father, who art in heaven." There seemed to be a magic in the sentence; his voice grew steady, and lifted by the real fervor of his feelings, he forgot himself and his auditors, and when he had concluded, the serious brows of the children bore witness to the hallowed influence of true and unaffected piety. Timothy rejoiced in spirit that what he had commenced so fearfully had terminated so well. Gathering courage from success, he approached within four yards of Miss Mitty, and offered, with many

hems and coughs, if it would not be considered an intrusion, and if it was thought he had the proper qualification, to assist her in taking a class. Miss Mitty looked as if she would have blushed if the steady bloom of her cheek had admitted. She certainly looked pleased, said every thing that was proper on such an occasion, acknowledged that she had long wished for a fellow-laborer, and admitted it as the omen of better things. Never was Timothy better satisfied with the world in which he lived, than when the duties of the day being ended, he found himself walking side by side with Miss Mitty, through the same beautiful path, actually carrying her basket of books, though a cold sweat covered his forehead at his own presumption, when he proposed to relieve her of her burden. A rich crimson was beginning to mantle the blue of the western horizon; the air breathed softer and balmier. Timothy looked at the sky, at the trees, and the ground. His soul expanded at the magnificence of the scene. He felt called upon to express his emotions, but knew not how to embody them.

"Miss Mitty," at length said he, "hem—hem—Miss Mitty, is it not a very pretty evening?"

"Very pretty, indeed; I think it grows a little cooler."

"I don't know; I haven't observed any clouds."

Miss Mitty raised her eyes as she spoke toward the heavens, and as she brought them down to earth, she happened to rest them on Timothy, who, by a singular coincidence, happened to be looking at her. The glance was very kind and approving, and might have encouraged a more bashful man.

"What was it you said, ma'am?"

"Sir!"

"I beg pardon; I thought you were going to say something."

"No, sir—"

A dead pause succeeded, and poor Timothy could not think of any thing else to say. They were very near home; a beautiful rose-bush grew close to the path, and spread out its fair blossoms so invitingly, Timothy could not help plucking one.

"Do you like roses, Miss Mitty?"

"Yes, sir; very much, indeed."

"Would you—like *this* rose—Miss Mitty?"

This was uttered with a dreadful effort, and the rose trembled in his hand, as if shaken by the evening breeze. The lady took it with a gracious smile, touched it to her nostril, then put it in her belt on the left side. What apparently trifling things change the color of one's destiny! A solitary grain of musk will perfume a room for many years, a single flower given and taken may impart fragrance to a whole existence. This was the first offering Timothy had ever made to any woman, his sister excepted, and the recollection of his courage made him feel dizzy when he was alone.

From that memorable day the duties of the Sunday-school were never neglected. Every Sunday saw them associated in the interesting task of instruction and exhortation, and so admirably did his meekness and humility temper Miss Mitty's parading virtues, the school was never known to be under such happy auspices. Every Sunday during the season of flowers was a rose timidly offered and kindly received, but matters went no further. In vain Mrs. Butler rallied and scolded him for being an old bachelor; he always answered, "He did not think it prudent to be otherwise." There was one auspicious omen, however; he now invariably ended the sentence with a sigh, and was often observed to lean his head on his hand and look abstractedly on the wall. To judge truly of a man's thoughts we must follow him in the solitude of his own room, and such a room as Timothy's was well worth being admitted into. It had once been an office, and was attached to Mr. Butler's store, where he sometimes officiated as merchant *pro tem.* It was a miniature gallery of the fine arts, a miniature menagerie, aviary; a a little world displayed. There were pictures of his own painting, (for Timothy was an artist of the most original kind, as every one who ever saw his paintings must acknowledge,) adorning the walls—stuffed birds and living birds in cages—the prettiest little gray and white kitten with a cork tied to its tail; a large tortoise-shell cat; several snakes in green glass bottles; a tame squirrel; coral sea-fans and some pieces of a petrified wig; all the wonders of earth, air and sea condensed and harmonized. To preserve and cherish these treasures, and add to their

number was one of the great objects of Timothy's existence, or rather had been, for his whole soul was no longer absorbed in them. There was something wanting, which he had never been conscious of before. The plumage of his birds was as soft and bright, but it no longer charmed his eye or their warbling his ear. His little kitten frisked and frolicked as gracefully, and his squirrel held a nut in his paws as cunningly as ever—they did not divert him as they were wont to do. "What can be the matter with me?" said he one day to himself, as he sat in the midst of his curiosities and pets. "There is nothing I can do to please myself. I can't paint any thing striking or natural; my snakes don't look as handsome as they used to; my cat don't purr half as pretty; I'm tired of all my pets; I must get a new one." Just at that moment a figure glided by the window, whose discreet motions and measured step were not to be mistaken. The pulsations of his heart were mysteriously quickened. He went to the window and looked wistfully after her. She was dressed in white, and looked remarkably nice and airy. "Ah!" exclaimed he, continuing his soliloquy, "I think I know what is the matter; I believe it is Miss Mitty after all; what an imprudent man I am!" and Timothy leaned his head upon the window frame with a penitential sigh. "It was sister that put all this into my head; I never should have thought of it myself; I wonder if *she* feels as I do!" There was a charm in this speculation which he found irresistible. He recalled her kind looks, her invitation to him to officiate in so responsible an office, her frequent visits to his sisters, till he convinced himself they were both indulging in very tender sentiments, which prudence expressly forbade; he had no fortune, and how could he marry? He never thought of the possibility of making one by his own exertions. His humility would have startled at such a suggestion. He had a wealthy uncle who lived in a neighboring State, who had no children of his own, whom he thought it not impossible would leave him a handsome legacy; but this uncle was in the prime of life, vigorous and robust, who probably thought as little of dying as Timothy himself. The only course which he deemed it *prudent* to pursue, was to conceal his growing tenderness from the object who inspired it, and going

steadily forward in the straight line of duty, reconcile himself as much as possible to his solitary existence. But for the first time in his life, he experienced a conflict between inclination and principle. It was a hard trial to his resignation. The distressed expression of his face was noticed that night at table by Mr. Butler, who seldom noticed any thing but the quantity of food devoured.

"Timothy," said he, "what are you thinking of? You have been looking into the salt-cellar for ten minutes steadily. Do you see any motes in it? I hope I have not been cheated in it: I paid a high price for it, to be sure."

"Oh! never mind the salt," interrupted his considerate wife, "he does not feel very well. Here, Tim, drink some of this cool butter-milk; it will do you good."

"Thank you, sister, I do not feel quite well to-night."

He blessed her in silence for not calling him an old bachelor, and poured the buttermilk unconsciously into his coffee.

"I wish Miss Mitty were here," exclaimed Joseph Butler, the eldest son of Mr. Butler, a mischievous youth of sixteen, with rosy cheeks and black curling locks, the idol of his mother, the torment of the household, the dread of his uncle; "I wish Miss Mitty Schoolcraft were here; don't you, uncle?"

"Phew!" said Mr. Butler, turning up his long nose, "let Miss Mitty stay at home; she has too large an appetite to please me; her *small pieces* amount to a respectable quantity, to be sure they do."

Where is the lover who can hear a reflection upon the beloved object, without an indignant glow? Timothy's blood rose, and miraculous as it may seem, he dared to vindicate her.

"I think," he stammered forth, "I think Miss Mitty shows her discretion in eating slowly; I have heard Dr. Philler say, it was not prudent to swallow too fast."

"Miss Mitty is indeed a model of prudence," said Mrs. Butler, "in every thing; I wish all the young women of the present generation were like her; she will make an admirable wife, and he will be a happy man that gets her."

Mrs. Butler had never ventured to say so much before her husband, but she was soon silenced.

"Mrs. Butler," cried he, in a solemn tone, laying down his knife and fork, "you had better be done with your nonsense; I really believe you have been putting some of your ridiculous conceits in Tim's head; a pretty husband he would make, to be sure—with nothing but his birds, and cats, and snakes, to support a wife and family."

"I don't think of such a thing as being married, Mr. Butler," said Timothy, with a dignity never assumed before, "I know it would be very imprudent; if I got a legacy from my uncle, it would alter the case; but that is very uncertain, indeed."

A sigh which might have softened a heart of stone, concluded this speech, but it made no visible impression on the indurated bosom of Mr. Butler. Joe Butler was observed to be unusually mischievous that evening, (after his father had left the house,) overturned every thing that came in his way, and shook his black curls as if brooding over something of vast import.

Things remained in *statu quo* for two or three months. Miss Mitty went to visit an aunt about thirty miles distant, and the operations of the Sunday School were suspended. The winter, short and mild in that genial clime, came and melted into the blossoms of an early spring. The cheek of Timothy gave evident indications of the wasting influence of hidden passion. It assumed a kind of russet hue, while his thin nose looked still thinner, and wore, if possible, a bluer tint. His kind sister made him drink copiously of rue and wormwood tea, to give him a healthy appetite, urged him to ride on horseback before breakfast, and made a pillow of hops to call back the vagrant slumbers to his restless couch. But "neither poppy nor mandragora could ever medicine him to the sweet sleep" he was wont to enjoy. Mrs. Butler was a woman of very little sentiment, and never dreamed that she had herself been the innocent cause of the malady she was taking such ineffectual means to cure. Concerned as she felt for him, she could not help telling him "it was nothing but the hypo, or the megrims, for old bachelors always were troubled with them."

It was a fine morning on the first of April, all smiles,

no tears: they had all been kissed away by the sun. Mrs. Butler was in her garden, a basket of flower-seeds in her hand, giving directions to a man, who was laying out the beds in the form of hearts and diamonds, and setting box in every corner. She was obliged to stop every now and then to scold her son Joe, who was jumping into the midst of the moist beds, overturning the flower-seeds, carrying off the gardener's tools, and doing every thing in the world he ought not to do. At last seeing his uncle approaching, he climbed up a peach-tree, and sat embosomed in the leaves, as quiet as the maternal bird in its nest.

"Brother Tim, you are the very man I want. Just run over to Mrs. Tilner's and ask her for some slips of that scarlet geranium of hers. It is such a beautiful morning for gardening—you will see Miss Mitty, too, for she came back last night."

"I should be glad to oblige you, sister," answered Timothy, with deep solemnity, lifting at the same time his handkerchief to his eyes, "but I am called to attend to matters of more importance; something very unexpected indeed. I must start immediately on a long journey."

"A long journey! why, the man is crazy. You were never ten miles from home in your life."

"Read that, sister," said he, putting a letter in her hand, "you will see it is no joking matter."

Mrs. Butler opened her eyes as wide as a morning-glory, while she perused the following letter:—

———, *March 3d*,——.

DEAR SIR:

As the administrator of your late uncle's estate, I am authorized to address you. By his sudden and lamented death you are at once a loser and a gainer. You have lost a worthy and generous uncle, and gained a large and unincumbered fortune. Your presence here will be immediately required, and I trust you will start as soon as possible after the receipt of this.

Yours, with much respect, &c.

The tears dropped from Mrs. Butler's eyes before she

finished the epistle. She loved her uncle very much, and was grieved and shocked at his unexpected death. No feeling of regret entered her disinterested mind, that she was omitted in the will; she rejoiced at her brother's prosperity in the midst of her mourning.

"Well, Timothy, since it has pleased Heaven to take away our dear uncle, I am glad with all my heart that he has seen fit to make you his heir. I am sure you will make a good use of it."

"I will try to be a prudent steward," was the meek reply "But please, sister, to see that my best shirts and cravats are brought in from the wash, and sew that button on my buff waistcoat."

Mrs. Butler promised to have every thing in readiness, and leaving her beloved plants, accompanied her brother to the house. By one of those singular coincidences, which destiny loves to bring about, who should be seen walking through the gate at that moment, but Miss Submit Schoolcraft, coming to pay the morning respects to her dear friend Mrs. Butler, after an absence of many weeks.

"I declare," said Mrs. Butler, "if there isn't Miss Mitty! I am so glad she is come."

"Sister," said Timothy, "if you think it would be prudent, I should—should like to speak a few words to Miss Mitty before I start—I have something—particular, hem—perhaps—you know what I mean."

"Oh! yes indeed that's right; speak like a man. You've a right to hold up your head now."

The lady in question was now within speaking distance, and the ceremonies of meeting passed. The beating of Timothy's heart sounded in his own ears like the trampling of horses feet on frozen ground. The only obstacle to the union for which he had long secretly panted was now removed, and he found himself suddenly in the presence of the very and only woman who had ever awakened a sentiment of love in his unpolluted bosom. Before he had recovered from the stunning effect of such unexpected circumstances, he was seated alone with Miss Mitty in the front parlor, for Mrs. Butler kindly recollected a thousand things to do, that required her presence elsewhere. She

had taken her seat by an open window, in the shade of a lilac bush in full bloom; a monthly rose, with a single flower, blushing on its stalk, stood on the window-frame. Timothy, who sat at the opposite side of the room, looked sideways toward the object of his attraction, and thought he had never seen her look so comely. Her ruffles were plaited so nicely, her hair was combed so smoothly, the folds of her neckerchief were so exact. Timothy sat with his feet on the rounds of the chair, and his hands in his waistcoat pocket; he felt glued to the spot—his tongue felt glued to the roof of his mouth.

At last Miss Mitty spoke; a woman is always the first to break such an awkward silence.

"Have you enjoyed your health, Mr. Fuller, since I saw you last?"

"Ah! Miss Mitty, I have not been quite well, but I feel some better now."

He hitched his chair two steps nearer.

"Have you been well, Miss Mitty, you look charmingly."

"My health has been excellent, thanks to Providence."

Every word that was uttered gave Timothy confidence to hitch a little nearer, till at last he got within the shade of the lilac tree.

"Miss Mitty, I have something very particular to say—if I may be so bold—would you be kind enough to read that letter?"

It was not without a great many coughs, and hems, and stammerings, he said all this. Having got this far he wiped the perspiration from his brow with his red silk handkerchief, fanned himself with its folds, looking steadily upon the green baize, till she folded up carefully the important document. She returned it, making a sensible remark upon the vanity of life, and the duty of resignation; and Timothy, who hoped the letter would break the ice, found he must make a desperate effort and break it himself. He looked round in a sort of despair, and his eye rested on that single rose, so sweet and fair. He remembered the flowers he had formerly presented; and breaking it from the stem, with a spontaneous burst of

nature and feeling, exclaimed, "Mi—Miss Mitty, do you remember the first rose I gave you?"

He would have given all the world to have read his doom in her countenance, but it was perfectly opaque in its fresh composure. He thought she smiled as she gave a monosyllable affirmative, but she held the rose to her mouth and he could not be quite certain.

"Sister thinks," continued he, emboldened by his own exertions, "I had better think of getting married: a prudent wife must be a great blessing."

"So must a good husband be;" answered she, looking modestly down, and Timothy felt his hopes elevated almost to the summit of ecstasy. He drew his chair a little nearer, and she did not retreat.

"Sister says, a good wife makes a good husband; if you will take me, Miss Mitty, I will promise to be the best husband in the world."

She did not make an immediate reply, but there was something so encouraging in her glance and deportment, something so ominous of a kind reply in the manner in which she cleared her throat of a sudden huskiness before beginning to speak, Timothy felt as if he were reaching the happiest moment of his existence. He stooped forward, and ventured to take the hand nearest him, which still held the proffered and accepted rose; a gentle pressure assured him that his presumption was pardoned and his hopes confirmed. He recollected having heard his sister tell how Mr. Butler kissed her hand when she consented to marry him, and perfect novice as he was in the art of courtship, he blessed his memory for assisting him in this most interesting moment of his life. He bent his head lower and lower, his lip was just within reach of a hand which never before had received such devoted homage, when his body being too entirely on the edge of the chair to keep the centre of gravity, and being unaccustomed to such a position, lost its equilibrium, and poor Timothy kissed the baize instead of Miss Mitty's hand, with a suddenness and fervor that completely stunned him.

At this awful moment, a loud shout was heard from behind the lilac bush, and the black curls of Joe Butler were distinctly seen through the boughs. In every disaster

there is some alleviating circumstance. Miss Mitty had a pleasure never before experienced, of seeing a lover prone at her feet; and however involuntary the prostration, it was flattering to her vanity. I suppose she must have a little vanity, for she was human.

The morning waned away. The stage was to start at noon that was to bear him to the scene of his future wealth. Timothy was the happiest of human beings. The wilderness blossomed, fountains gushed forth in the desert of his life. Then his conscience reproached him for not mourning for his uncle, and being so very happy, and he tried to look sad, but failing in the effort, laughed aloud. I will not describe the leave he took of Miss Mitty, nor the congratulations of Mrs. Butler, on the consummation of her warmest wishes, but I would mention how Mr. Butler heard the tidings of Timothy's windfall, but he was unfortunately absent in that eventful morning. The horn sounded clear and melodious, the stage rattled up to the door, the smooth black trunk was lashed on behind. Timothy took a tender leave of his sister, promised the children a thousand pretty things on his return; then stepping into the stage, was about to seat himself comfortably on the back seat, when Joe Butler, jumping on the wheel, whispered loudly in his ear, "*Oh! you April fool!*"

Then Timothy did indeed remember that it was the first of April, and his bosom died within him to think he had been the dupe of a mischief-loving boy. All his bright reversionary prospects melted in air; his visions of love dissolved in tears. He was incapable of harboring any bitter or revengeful feelings toward the young villain, who had served him such a trick, but the iron of mortification entered into his soul.

He got "sister" to explain matters to Miss Mitty, who, strange and perverse as it may seem, bestowed that resentment on the unoffending and too credulous Timothy which was due only to the saucy Joe. Mrs. Butler was so sensible of the injustice of this, that she gave up her matrimonial speculations, and even forgot herself so far as to call this pattern of propriety an "unreasonable old maid."

Good always comes out of evil: his flame expired with

the oil that fed it. The last time I heard from him he was quite hale and cheerful, going on in his single and upright course, a candidate, if ever man was, for that reward contained in the beautiful promise, "the pure in heart shall see God."

AUNT PATTY'S SCRAP-BAG.

CHAPTER I.

The family of Mr. Worth sat in silence around the breakfast table. It was an unusual thing; and one who had been accustomed to the cheerfulness that generally prevailed in the domestic circle, would have wondered at the stillness, and even sadness, that reigned at a board, covered with all the necessaries and many of the luxuries of life. It was, indeed, an inviting board. The cloth was white as the snow, which still lay in unmelted drifts on the northern side of the dwelling; the butter was fresh from the churn, with an impression of roses, which no one had yet defaced by a knife; the rolls were so light and white, they looked as if they had foamed up in the oven, and petrified there; honey that might have been extracted from the flowers of Canaan, from its sweetness and clearness, looked temptingly from a transparent dish; and buckwheat cakes, palpitating and smoking from the griddle, every pore filled with melted butter, were passed round the table, yet none but the younger children extended their fork, moved by a spirit of appropriation. Yes! there was one more, and that was Aunt Patty, who sat on the right side of Mrs. Worth, near the hissing coffee urn, and who never suffered sentiment to interfere with the duties of life—and of all its duties, she considered none of more importance and dignity than those connected with the science of gastronomy. While the family thus sit in silence, and most of them in idleness, we will avail ourselves of the opportunity of description, and present them individually before the reader. Let us pay honour where honour is due, and commence with Mrs. Worth, who sat at the head of the table, where she usually presided, the image of smiling hospitality; but this morning there was no smile

on her face, and every now and then a tear was seen gathering in her eye, which she tried to force back, but the utmost her efforts could accomplish was to prevent the gathering drops from falling in a shower. She was a handsome woman, or rather a lovely one, and, in early youth, must have been beautiful. In her bright and sunny moments, her cheek still wore a spring-like bloom, but now it was pale, and that wanness and languor which proceed from a restless and sleepless night was diffused over her whole countenance. She had that soft gray eye, which we always associate with our idea of a religious character—that colour which lightens and darkens like the clouds of heaven, in the sunshine and shadow of the heart. Her hair, of pale chestnut-brown, was parted on her brow, and brought down somewhat low over temples which needed their shade, to relieve their lofty proportions. The plain divided hair was also relieved by the border of a thin lace cap, ornamented by a pale rose-coloured ribbon. It was the colour her husband best loved, and she seldom wore any other. On her right side, as if to serve as a foil to her unfaded matron charms, sat Aunt Patty, her own maternal aunt, whose countenance gave one an idea of extreme goodness, from its excessive homeliness. Her nose was very large, particularly at the end, and about the regions of the nostrils, and, it is probable, the consciousness of possessing unusual accommodations for the business, induced her to adopt the profession of snuff-taking. But, whatever was the exciting motive, she was the very queen of snuff-takers, and the number and variety of her fancy snuff-boxes were the admiration of all the children of the neighbourhood. She had a box deposited by her plate, with the picture of Bonaparte in full regimentals on the top of it, whose nose was almost obliterated by incessant rapping. A crutch rested against her chair, which showed she was lame; and as her figure leaned painfully towards the right, it was evident that she needed support on that side. She had been a cripple from early childhood, and having been cut off from all the active enjoyments of life, had acquired an inordinate love of reading, though her taste was of rather a peculiar kind.

But we will not enter now into the minutiæ of mind. We are treating of externals, and there is a large family to dispose of before we can be admitted into the penetralia, or inner

sanctuary. There is another peculiarity of Aunt Patty's. She eats with her left hand alone—her right lies passive in her lap. Its sinews are contracted, and the skin looks dry and withered. When a child, she fell into the fire, when left to the charge of a faithless nurse, and the tender ligaments were scorched, the soft muscles hardened, and the vigorous growth stunted. It may be, that her irregularities of feature were caused by the same misfortune; the blood having less power in one part of the system rioted too madly in another, and produced many little excrescences, such as warts and moles, which gave a striking individuality to Aunt Patty's appearance.

Notwithstanding her total destitution of personal attractions, Aunt Patty was an object of great tenderness and affection to her kindred and intimate acquaintances. Unlike many, who are visited by similar calamities, and who are made selfish, and hard, and suspicious, she had all the disinterestedness and simplicity of a child. But it will never do to dwell so long on Aunt Patty, on her first introduction to the reader, though we acknowledge that she is an especial favourite.

There is a little chubby-faced, fat-armed, rosy-cheeked, curly-haired thing, seated up in a high chair, close to her side, who looks impatient to attract our notice. That is Estelle, the young star of the group, and the cloud that broods over every other face has cast no dimness on hers. It would be impossible for her to look sad. Her face is too round, her cheeks too rosy, and her eyes too blue and bright. Her upper lip is too short entirely to conceal her ivory teeth; so she cannot help smiling if she would—and her little nose, *un peu retroussé*, gives an air of inexpressible mischief to her countenance. She is Aunt Patty's pet, who would think the sun and moon well appropriated were they plucked from the sky to gratify the wishes of Estelle. Her dish is piled up with a heap of buckwheat cakes, almost as high as her head, swimming in an ocean of honey as well as butter, which Aunt Patty has provided for her darling, taking advantage of the sad and abstracted mood of the mother, who generally restricts the appetites of the children within the bounds of propriety. But Aunt Patty thinks that nature is the best guide, and that children ought to eat as long as they can swallow: and there is no doubt that the

dawning intellect of Estelle was often impeded in its operations by the injudicious indulgence of her privileged relative.

There is a great contrast between the fair, sunny-eyed Estelle, and the dark, gloomy-browed youth seated on her right. Who would dream that he is her own brother, the son of that gentle mother? Yet it is even so, and the same blood that seems to bubble up in her cherub-cheeks, flows like molten lead in his veins. He has the lofty brow of his mother, and the firm-set lips of his father, but his eyes are all his own—large, dark, and sullen, yet lustrous in their gloom; they remind one of a lantern in a dark abbey, or a torch in a dark pine wood, the flash making the shades more deep by contrast. The expression of misanthropy, which is the prevailing character of his countenance, he has worn from early childhood, and it now settles like a thick fog on the bloom of his adolescence. He is the Esau of the family, who believes there is no blessing for him. He seldom sits down at the domestic board, and nothing but an occasion like the present would induce him to depart from his gloomy and retired habits. Homer has the right of primogeniture, but he imagines his younger brother has robbed him of his birthright, and had he hated the world less, he might have become an alien from the paternal roof. The eyes of the father are now fixed upon him, with an expression of intense anxiety. Homer frowns under a consciousness of the steadfast look. He has a horror of being gazed upon; and meeting at the same time the tearful glance of his mother, he rises suddenly and leaves the table.

Mr. Worth was a man of remarkable dignity of appearance and manner. His figure was tall and stately, surmounted by a Roman bust and Brutus-head. He was said to resemble the best pictures of Washington, that is, in the somewhat square outline of the face, and the large sockets of the eyes; but the eyes themselves were larger and darker, and had more fire and tenderness, and the hue of his complexion and hair were both exceedingly dark. His smile was singularly fine, contrasting, as it did, with the prevailing gravity of his countenance. Little Estelle said, "when father smiled, it looked like the sun shining out from behind a cloud." Aunt Patty treasured this up among the many smart sayings, that indicated her favourite's precious genius. If the children hailed their father's smiles as the

breaking sunbeams, they feared his frowns of anger more than the wrath of elements. He was seldom angry, and never without a just cause; and he had such perfect mastery of his own passions, that even when unchained, he could make them the vassals of his will. His influence in his own family, in the neighbourhood, indeed, as far as he was known, was irresistible. It was the combined influence of a commanding intellect, uncompromising principles, enlarged philanthropy, and the kindliest sensibilities; and it is no wonder that such an union should have strength. His name became him well. It was a compendium of his whole character.

A pale young girl, of about twelve, sat on the right of her father, whose name was Emma; she was the eldest daughter of the household, and bore a striking resemblance to her father, though a constitutional delicacy of complexion gave a softness to features, which might have otherwise seemed too decided in their outline. She had a slender chest, drooping shoulders, a small, bright flush on her cheeks, and eyes too large in proportion to the rest of her face. But they were so brilliant, so spiritual, so unchildish in their expression, that with her fragile frame, and delicate, flushed complexion, her appearance was uncommonly interesting. You could read her history in her countenance from the cradle to the present hour. A feeble infant, apparently destined for a grave not more than a span long, a child of many tender cares and trembling hopes, hopes becoming steadier, and stronger as time passed on, without realizing the fears which often overshadowed those trembling hopes. She was the young moralist of the family; and sickness had given her such sanctity in the eyes of the younger children, that they looked upon her as more angel than mortal, as one who had wings on her shoulders, ready to unfurl in the golden light of heaven.

Seated between Emma and Bessy, the younger sister, was Edmund, the Jacob whom the misanthropic Homer suspected and envied. "In truth, young Edmund was no vulgar boy." There seemed an innate nobility about him, that spoke in his walk, in his bow, in the manner in which he put on his hat, or moved a chair, which the stranger-guest always noticed and admired. Then there was such sunniness and vivacity in his countenance, such winning

frankness and glowing warmth; his face was like a bright spring morning, all radiance and bloom. His mother said, that Edmund had never given her heart one moment's pain from disobedience, obstinacy, or passion; and Aunt Patty said, he came into the world with the commandments written on his heart, and that there was no need of his learning them. It was not often that a shadow flitted over his soul-lighted brow; but one rested there now, and it had deepened since Homer's abrupt departure from the table. Indeed, that circumstance had added to the evident depression of the family group.

Bessy, the younger sister of Emma, the foster-child of Hygea, looked like no one in the world but herself, and no one who saw her could wish her to look otherwise. She was very fair, and had that Grecian outline of face and feature, so beautiful in profile. Her eyes were of a clear cerulean, such as you see in a summer morning,—and they had a natural lifting towards heaven, as if conscious of their consanguinity with the beautiful azure of the skies. Then her hair! who ever saw such lovely ringlets? They were of a flaxen colour—not that dry, dingy flaxen, such as is seen on the heads of children who roll about all day in the hot sun, but a bright, golden texture, that sparkled and rippled in its own joyous freedom. Bessy was an ardent, imaginative child, and she loved to watch the clouds at sunset, and to tell her dreams in the morning. The other children called her Aunt Elinor, because Aunt Elinor, in that famous book Sir Charles Grandison, was the dream-teller of the novel. Not that they had read that voluminous work themselves, but they had heard it, revised and corrected, from the lips of Aunt Patty, who was unequalled in her oral powers. It was the first morning for a long time that Bessy had not entertained the family with some vision more dazzling and wonderful than all the creations of the Arabian Nights, the oracle of her imagination. But it is not probable she had any dreams to tell. She looked as if she had scarcely slept, and a pink circle round her eyes betrayed the tears which had been resting there.

But why, it may naturally be asked, this unusual silence and sadness, and traces of recent tears? It may be told in a few words;—The husband and father was about to depart on a long journey. He expected to be absent a long time

on perplexing business; and, moreover, he was going to the far south, to be exposed to a dangerous climate, peculiarly dangerous to a man of his vigorous constitution. He was going on horseback, for he could not bear the confinement of a stage, when he could ride in the open air on his good horse Faithful, who had carried him safely over many a rough and weary road. His trunks had already been forwarded, and his valise lay ready in a chair to be strapped on the back of Faithful, who, if he could have been conscious of the treasures it contained, would have exulted under the burden. Had there been room, the children would have loaded him with bushels of apples, and nuts, and cakes, to regale the traveller;—as it was, they mourned bitterly over the narrow limits prescribed to them, and wished valises were made of India rubber, so that they could be stretched as wide as one wished. Estelle was extremely desirous to pack up her gray and white kitten for her father's amusement, but when he convinced her that it would die for want of air, her solicitude for her kitten conquered her filial anxiety. She persuaded him, however, to take a china kitten, which had been her pet before she had a present of the live one, as there was no danger of smothering it, and it would occupy very little room.

Emma, who was celebrated for her skill as a seamstress, had for some time been sedulously engaged in making up some fine linen shirts for her father, in which she would allow no one to put one stitch but herself. Not satisfied with the multitudinous and superfluous stitches which custom requires should be used in the manufacture of such garments, she was embroidering the gussets, and hemstitching the bosoms, in all the luxuriance of ornamental affection, when he convinced her that there was great danger of his being taken up as an ultra dandy, and she was obliged to content herself with greater simplicity of execution.

Bessy had been knitting a pair of dark worsted gloves, with an ivory hook, which, after some unexpected difficulties, were completed to the satisfaction of her father, if not to her own. The first glove was too small, but he said it was not of any consequence, for it would stretch; the next was too large, but he was equally sure that it would shrink. This kind of reasoning reminded Bessy of the traveller, who warmed his fingers and cooled his broth with the same

breath. But when she saw the gloves upon his hands, without presenting much apparent discrepancy, she was satisfied of the soundness of his arguments. They were a very acceptable gift, as the chill winds of March were blowing, and the traveller needed every comfort to shield him from their northern blasts.

Aunt Patty had put an ample snuff-box in the corner of his valise, and told him he must take a pinch of snuff every night in memorial of her, and he must bring her the prettiest box in all Carolina, as a keepsake in return. Aunt Patty made another request, which he promised to remember, and, as far as it was practicable, obey. One of her darling hobbies was to collect pieces of calico, muslin, and silk, samples of the dresses of all her friends and acquaintances, and every once in a while she would open her scrap-bag, and review her treasures, telling the names of the individuals who wore such and such frocks, and relating many choice anecdotes, connected with the circumstances under which the specimens were obtained. She gave positive injunctions to Mr. Worth, to preserve relics of the dresses of all the ladies with whom he became acquainted, to add to her already vast collection. She anticipated a rich feast in comparing the colour, texture, and figure of the materials which compose a southern lady's wardrobe, imagining it must be entirely different from her northern sisters. This was such an innocent recreation to Aunt Patty, and her sources of enjoyment were so limited, and it was such a delight to the children, to gather round her knees, and hear the history of the parti-coloured shreds, which lay like a broken rainbow in her lap, that Mr. Worth himself took no small pleasure in thinking he should have an opportunity of adding to her already immense hoard. She gave him a large reception bag, in which to deposit the precious morceaus, with many directions to learn every thing possible connected with the wearers of the garments, that the increase in her historical lore might be in proportion to the accession of her wealth. "Well," said she, breaking the silence, and trying to coax Estelle with a fresh roll, who leaned back in her high chair in a state of perfect repletion, "there is no use in looking so sad. The world is made up of partings and meetings; and if people never parted they would never know the comfort of meeting again. It is well to go away

sometimes, just to know how good home is. We must only trust in Providence, and all will go right wherever we may be."

"Yes, Aunt Patty," replied Mr. Worth, with a slight huskiness of voice, "you have uttered volumes in that little phrase. The belief in a guardian Providence, that not only watches over me, but mine, will be my best consolation during the lonely hours of absence. My wife, my children, you must remember that I shall watch the coming of the mail as the approach of a good angel, and you must not let it come without tokens of love for me."

"There is no need of reminding me as a duty, of what will be my chief happiness," replied Mrs. Worth, half reproachfully. "I only fear that I shall occupy too much of your time. You know, in my own family, they called me the scribbler, and I have not forfeited the title."

"You are blest with the pen of a ready writer," said the husband, "and can speak from the heart to the heart most eloquently. There are many who are charming companions when present, who are cold and careless in absence. Letter-writing is an accomplishment of priceless value—one in which the best qualities of the head and heart are called into exercise. I wish my children to cultivate it in a high degree. They can have no better opportunity than addressing an absent and loving father. You fear my criticism? Well I acknowledge I am rather an unmerciful critic; but it is only by the exposure of your errors you will improve. I place my standard of excellence very high, and you must all strive to attain it. Yet be not discouraged—simplicity, truth and vivacity, are the best qualities in a correspondent, and little Estelle herself can boast of these, and would write an admirable letter, if her chirography were equal to her intelligence."

"Chirography!" repeated Aunt Patty—"you don't expect the child to understand such a word as that. I always think it best to use short words in speaking to children."

"You can explain it to her, Aunt Patty," said Edmund, rather archly, for he well knew, that though Aunt Patty was a devourer of books, she saw no necessity of understanding the meaning of every word she read herself, and when she saw a long word she was apt to skip it. "But, father," continued he, "mother will tell you all the good

and great things in her long letters, and there will be none but little, insignificant trifles for us to relate."

"You are mistaken, my boy, if you think great things are necessary to give interest to an epistle from home. The slightest incident, the description of the daily minutiæ of life, a walk in the woods, a visit to or from a friend, a sketch of the book you are reading—the drawing you are making —possess a charm, which young letter-writers cannot imagine, or they would never strain after such unnatural subjects and artificial style as they sometimes do. Even a dream, my Bessy, such as has often enlivened our family breakfast table, would be quite captivating at times. You must all write as if you were my only correspondent, and be not afraid of repeating the same thing twice, for you will all relate it in a different manner, and that will prevent it from being tedious. I expect a great deal from my young moralist here, who can turn even the frolics of Estelle's kitten into sources of instruction."

Emma blushed, and the children began to reflect a great deal on the importance of letter-writing, and of the materials they intended to collect to fill their future pages. They felt elevated in their own estimation, since they found their father looked to them for intellectual amusement, and they resolved that no link should be wanting in the chain of events wrought during his absence, but that it should receive brightness and beauty from their touch. They became, in a measure, reconciled to his departure, and a gleam of sunshine broke through the cloud which had lowered over the household shrine. The long, gloomy silence being once broken, conversation flowed more easily and cheerfully, and they all, by tacit understanding, lingered as long as possible round the table, knowing their rising would be the signal for his departure.

"There is one caution, Aunt Patty," said Mr. Worth, "which I must mention, and you must not be displeased." Here one of his rare smiles gleamed on his countenance, and Aunt Patty smiled from sympathy, though she knew not its meaning. "Now," added he, "you want your darling Estelle to be a beauty, a wit, and a genius, but if you pamper her appetite as you now do, she will be nothing but a gross little animal, with eyes standing out with fatness, and head as heavy as an apple-dumpling. Show your love to

her in any other way; give her red-headed pins, buttonwood balls, or any of your peculiar gifts, but don't drown her in butter or honey, or stuff her with rolls and hot cakes."

"If its the fashion to starve children now," replied Aunt Patty, "to make them bright, it wasn't when I was young. I was always allowed to eat what I wanted, and it never hurt my intellect."

"But all minds may not possess such a preservative principle as yours, Aunt Patty. At any rate, attend to my wishes in this respect, and I will put every lady I see under contribution for your calico museum. Edmund, find your brother; I must see him again before I bid you farewell. That unhappy boy," added he, in a low voice to his wife, as they together left the apartment, "I fear he will hang heavy on your heart during my absence."

"Deal gently with him, my husband," said the mother; "a word, a mere breath wounds his sensitive and too exacting spirit. Do not upbraid him for his strange and abrupt manners—a word of reproof now would rankle in his bosom for months. We must be very, very tender with him, if we would not alienate him entirely from our affections."

"Ah! my beloved Emma," replied he, "I fear the very excess of your tenderness has a pernicious influence on his character. It fosters that morbid, selfish sensibility which preys darkly on itself, and converts into wormwood and gall the very life-blood of his heart. I perceive he is in one of his darkest moods, and I cannot leave him, without making a more strenuous effort than I have ever done before, to rouse him from the moral sepulchre in which he is entombing himself. Do not fear, I will address him with all the tenderness of a mother, mingled with the authority of a father; and, if I cannot move his sullen temper, I will take him with me, rather than the peace of my household should be disturbed by his strange paroxysms of passion."

"Oh! never," exclaimed Mrs. Worth, "he would be wretched among strangers; and so great would be his reluctance, that you would be compelled to use coercion to force obedience to your will. Though you fear the effects of too much tenderness, I have no words to express my dread of the consequences of such a course. If one human being has more influence over him than another, I believe it is myself, and I know he will not willingly add to the sorrow caused by this long separation."

Mrs. Worth hung on her husband's arm as she spoke, and looked beseechingly in his eyes. She pleaded the cause of her first-born with all a mother's eloquence. Much as her own heart condemned him, she could not bear that others should speak with severity of his faults. She seemed conscious, that instead of winning, he repelled from him the affections and sympathies of his kind, and she wanted to make up to him, in the prodigality of a mother's love, for the forfeited esteem of the world. So unceasing, so shielding, was her watchful observance of him, that many misinterpreted her feelings, and believed him her favourite child, more especially as she often repressed the gushings of her maternal heart towards Edmund, her beautiful and beloved, lest the demon of jealousy, that lay like a sleeping lion in the breast of Homer, should leap from its lair.

Unable to control, or conceal her agitation, Mrs. Worth left the apartment, from an opposite door, as Homer entered and stood before his father, with folded arms and sullen brow.

Mr. Worth remained silent a few moments, with his left hand in his breast, and his right supported by the back of a chair. It was his usual attitude; and as it presented his person in its full height, it enhanced its commanding dignity. The struggle to master his emotions gave a sternness to his countenance, of which he was not aware, and Homer felt he was arraigned before a judge, rather than a father, and he resolved to meet him in the spirit of a man.

"My son," said Mr. Worth, "I wished to speak with you a few moments, apart from the rest of the family, and I would speak with the solemnity of one, who may never have an opportunity of addressing you again. On the eve of parting from objects inexpressibly dear, anxieties, heavy before, press upon me with the weight of iron. I go, in the hope of establishing my claims to an inheritance which will place my children in affluence, and give them an influence in society which merit and talent alone could not impart. You are my first-born son, and, though a mere boy in years, are fast acquiring the stature of a man. Your mind has grown beyond your years, and were its energies well directed, it might become, at some future day, a mighty engine, to work out your country's good. But the same power, compressed in its limits, may be terrible. Like the tiger

that chafes in impotent strength against the bars of its cage, it lashes itself to fury, and is wasted itself at last in ineffectual efforts. You like strong expressions, and I use them. You do not like to be treated as a child, and I place in you the confidence of a man. For your sake, more than for my other children, do I involve myself in the intricacies of law, and sacrifice the comforts of home. You, as my eldest born, will be my representative, and society will look to you, to keep up the honour of a name, known and respected through many generations. The higher your fortunes, the greater your responsibilities. My son, I wish you to feel them as you ought."

"No, father," replied Homer gloomily; "it is not for me to sustain your name and fame. You have another son, younger, it is true, but a great deal more gifted and more beloved than I am. Let Edmund have all the money, since he has stolen every thing else."

"And who told you, unhappy boy, that Edmund had supplanted you in our affections? What proofs of love has he received which have not been lavished on you? Oh! Homer, my heart bleeds for your perverseness. And there is another heart, still more tender and fond than mine, that throbs with unutterable anxiety on your account. You were the first that opened the overflowing fountain of parental love in our bosoms, that fountain which no ingratitude can chill, no exactions can drain. We love Edmund no better than yourself. There is an evil spirit within you, which whispers bad lessons to your secret soul. Beware, Homer; it is the same spirit that instigated Cain to envy, hate, then murder his unoffending brother, and bathed the green turf of Eden in kindred blood. The same spirit which urged the jealous brothers of Joseph to all their dark and cruel deeds. Beware, lest it wind you, body and soul, in its serpent folds."

Homer turned very pale, and his under-lip quivered with emotion. He averted his head, but not before his father saw large, scalding tears, plashing like rain-drops on his cheek. Mr. Worth could man himself against his sullen, defying mood, but this unexpected burst of sensibility melted him at once. Taking his hand, and drawing him closely to him, he attempted to speak, but the effort was ineffectual. Homer's long pent-up feelings, having once broke loose, were

ungovernable. He leaned his head on his father's shoulder, and, in the strong language of Scripture, "lifted up his voice and wept aloud." "Oh, my son!" exclaimed his father, when he once more obtained the mastery of his voice, "never, since the hour when I first received you a new-born babe in my arms, has my heart yearned over you as it does at this moment. Promise me, then, in the strength of awakened confidence and affection, that you will make, during my absence, the happiness of your mother your first object —that of your brother and sisters your next. Promise, with God's help, that if I should return no more, and this house should become the home of the widow and the fatherless, that you will be their stay and pillar, their shield and consolation."

Homer grasped his father's hands, and, uplifting his eyes, repeated the promise he required. Good angels were hovering near, and the evil spirit fled from the music of their rustling wings. The father and son went out together hand in hand; and when the mother met them, she knew that all was well between them, and she was sustained in the trying moment of separation.

The thousand adieus were spoken, the farewell embraces given, and the traveller, mounted on the back of Faithful, who had also received many an affectionate caress, passed from the loved shadow of the homestead. The wife retired to her chamber, that she might veil her grief in secrecy,— the children stood at the door, and followed with wistful gaze the stately figure of their father, till the last glimpse of his dark-blue riding-dress disappeared beneath the arch of two meeting elms. The voice of Aunt Patty called them back into the breakfast room.

"You must never look after a person as long as you can see them," said she, with mournful emphasis; "it is a sure sign that you will never see them again."

"Oh! don't say so, Aunt Patty," exclaimed Bessy, with a fresh burst of tears, "we have all been looking after him as long as we could see his shadow on the snow."

A reverential belief in signs and omens was another of Aunt Patty's individualities; and in these Bessy had more faith than the other children, for Aunt Patty was the interpreter of her dreams, and invested them with a prophetic dignity, at least in her own eyes.

CHAPTER II.

It was a rainy day, a real, old-fashioned, orthodox rainy day. It rained the first thing in the morning, it rained harder and harder at midday. The afternoon was drawing to a close, and still the rain came down in steady and persevering drops, every drop falling in a decided and obstinate way, as if conscious, though it might be ever so unwelcome, no one had a right to oppose its coming. A rainy day in mid-summer is a glorious thing. The grass looks up so green and grateful under the life-giving moisture; the flowers send forth such a delicious aroma; the tall forest-trees bend down their branches so gracefully in salutation to the messengers of heaven. There are beauty, grace, and glory in a mid-summer rain, and the spirit of man becomes gay and buoyant under its influence. But a March rain in New England, when the vane of the weather-cock points inveterately to the north-east, when the brightness, and purity, and *positiveness* of winter is gone, and not one promise of spring breaks cheeringly on the eye, is a dismal concern.

Little Estelle stood looking out at the window, with her nose pressed against a pane of glass, wishing it would clear up, it was so pretty to see the sun break out just as he was setting. The prospect abroad was not very inviting. It was a patch of mud and a patch of snow, the dirtiest mixture in nature's olio. A little boy went slumping by, sinking at every step almost to his knees; then a carriage slowly and majestically came plashing along, its wheels buried in mud. the horses labouring and straining, and every now and then shaking the slime indignantly from their fetlocks, and probably thinking none but amphibious animals should be abroad in such weather.

"Oh! it is such an ugly, ugly day!" said Estelle, "I do wish it were over."

"You should not find fault with the weather," replied Emma; "mother says it is wicked, for God sends us what weather seemeth good to him. For my part, I have had a very happy day reading and sewing."

"And I too," said Bessy, "but I begin to be tired now, and I wish I could see some of those beautiful crimson clouds, tinged with gold, that wait upon sunset."

"Bessy has such a romantic mode of expression," cried Edmund, laughing and laying down his book; "I think she will make a poet one of these days. Even now, I see upon her lips 'a prophetess's fire.'"

Bessy's blue eyes peeped at her brother through her golden curls, and something in them seemed to say, "that is not such a ridiculous prophecy as you imagine."

"This is a dreadful day for a traveller," said Mrs. Worth, with a sigh, and the children all thought of their father, exposed to the inclemency of the atmosphere, and they echoed their mother's sigh. They all looked very sad, till the entrance of another member of the family turned their thoughts into a new channel. This was no other than Estelle's kitten, which had been perambulating in the mire and rain, till she looked the most forlorn object in the world. Her sides were hollow and dripping, and her tail clung to her back in a most abject manner. There was a simultaneous exclamation at her dishevelled appearance, but Miss Kitty walked on as demurely as if nothing particular had happened to her, and jumping on her little mistress's shoulder, curled her wet tail round her ears, and began to mew and purr, opening and shutting her green eyes between every purr. Much as Estelle loved her favourite, she was not at all pleased at her present proximity, and called out energetically for deliverance. All laughed long and heartily at the muddy streaks on her white neck, and the muddy tracks on her white apron, and she looked as if she had not made up her mind, whether to laugh or cry, when a fresh burst of laughter produced a complete reaction, and a sudden shower of tears fell precipitately on Aunt Patty's lap.

"Take care, Estelle," said Edmund, "Aunt Patty has got on her thunder and lightning calico. She does not like to have it rained on."

"Aunt Patty had a favourite frock, the ground-work of which was a deep brown, with zig-zag streaks of scarlet, darting over it. Estelle called it thunder and lightning, and certainly it was a very appropriate similitude for a child. It always was designated by that name, and Edmund declared

that, whenever Aunt Patty wore that dress, it was sure to bring a storm. She was now solicited by many voices to bring out one of her scrap-bags for their amusement. And she, who never wearied of recalling the bright images of her youthful fancy, or the impressions of later years, produced a gigantic satchel, and undrawing the strings, Estelle's little hand was plunged in, and grasping a piece by chance, smiles played like sunbeams on her tears, when she found it was a relic of old Parson Broomfield's banian. It consisted of broad shaded stripes, of an iron-gray colour, a very sober and ministerial-looking calico. "Ah!" said Aunt Patty—the chords of memory wakened to music at the sight. "I remember the time when I first saw Parson Broomfield wear that banian. I was a little girl then, and my mother used to send me on errands here and there, in a little carriage, made purposely for me on account of my lameness. A boy used to draw me, in the same way that they do infants, and everybody stopped and said something to the poor lame girl. I was going by the parsonage, one warm summer morning, and the parson was sitting reading under a large elm tree, that grew directly in front of his door. He had a bench put all round the trunk, so that weary travellers could stop and rest under its shade. He was a blessed man, Parson Broomfield—of such great piety, that some thought if they could touch the hem of his garment they would have a passport to heaven. I always think of him when I read that beautiful verse in Job: 'The young men saw him and trembled, the aged arose and stood up.' Well, there he sat, that warm summer morning, in his new striped banian, turned back from his neck, and turned carelessly over one knee, to keep it from sweeping on the grass. He had on black satin lasting pantaloons, and a black velvet waistcoat, that made his shirt collar look as white as snow. He lifted his eyes, when he heard the wheels of my carriage rolling along, and made a sort of motion for me to stop. 'Good morning, little Patty,' said he, 'I hope you are very well this beautiful morning.' We always thought it an honour to get a word from his lips, and I felt as if I could walk without a crutch the whole day. He was very kind to little children, though he looked so grand and holy in the pulpit, you would think he was an angel of light, just come down there from the skies."

"Did he preach in that calico frock?" asked Emma, anxious for the dignity of the ministerial office.

"Oh! no, child—all in solemn black, except his white linen bands. He always looked like a saint on Sunday, walking in the church so slow and stately, yet bowing on the right and left, to the old, white-headed men, that waited for him as for the consolation of Israel. Oh! he was a blessed man, and he is in glory now. Here," added she, taking a piece of spotless linen from a white folded paper, is a remnant of the good man's shroud. I saw him when he was laid out, with his hands folded on his breast, and his Bible resting above them."

"Don't they have any Bibles in heaven?" asked little Estelle, shrinking from contact with the funereal sample.

"No, child; they will read there without books, and see without eyes, and know every thing without learning. But they put his Bible on his heart, because he loved it so in life, and it seemed to be company for him in the dark coffin and lonely grave."

The children looked serious, and Emma's wistful eyes, lifted towards heaven, seemed to long for that region of glorious intuition, whither the beloved pastor of Aunt Patty's youth was gone. Then the youngest begged her to tell them something more lively, as talking about death, and the coffin, and grave, made them melancholy such a rainy day.

"Here," said Bessy, "is a beautiful pink and white muslin. The figure is a half open rosebud, with a delicate cluster of leaves. Who had a dress like this, Aunt Patty?"

"That was the dress your mother wore the first time she saw your father," answered the chronicler, with a significant smile. Bessy clasped her hands with delight, and they all gathered close, to gaze upon an object associated with such an interesting era.

"Didn't she look sweet?" said Bessy, looking admiringly at her handsome and now blushing mother.

"Yes! her cheeks were the colour of her dress, and that day she had a wreath of roses in her hair; for Emma's father loved flowers, and made her ornament herself with them to please his eye. It was about sunset. It had been very sultry, and the roads were so dusty we could scarcely see after a horse or carriage passed by. Emma was in the front yard watering some plants, when a gentleman on horseback rodo

slowly along, as if he tried to make as little dust as possible. He rode by the house at first, then turning back, he came right up to the gate, and, lifting up his hat, bowed down to the saddle. He was a tall, dark-complexioned young man, who sat nobly on his horse, just as if he belonged to it. Emma, your mother that is, set down her watering pot, and made a sort of courtesy, a little frightened at a stranger coming so close to her, before she knew any thing about it. 'May I trouble you for a glass of water?' said he, with another bow. 'I have travelled long, and am oppressed with thirst.' Emma courtesied again, and blushed too, I dare say, and away she went for a glass of water, which she brought him with her own hands. Your grandfather had come to the door by this time, and he said he never saw a man so long drinking a glass of water in his life. As I told you before, it had been a terribly sultry day, and there were large thunder pillars leaning down black in the west—a sure sign there was going to be a heavy shower. Your grandfather came out, and being an hospitable man, he asked the stranger to stop and rest till the rain that was coming was over. He didn't wait to be asked twice, but jumped from his horse and walked in, making a bow at the door, and waiting for your mother to walk in first. Well, sure enough, it did rain in a short time, and thunder, and lightning, and blow, as if the house would come down; and the strange gentleman sat down close by Emma, and tried to keep her from being frightened, for she looked as pale as death; and when the lightning flashed bright, she covered up her face with her hands. It kept on thundering and raining till bed-time, when your grandfather offered him a bed, and told him he must stay till morning. Everybody was taken with him, for he talked like a book, and looked as if he knew more than all the books in the world. He told his name, and all about himself—that he was a young lawyer just commencing business in a town near by, (the very town we are now living in;) that he had been on a journey, and was on his way home, which he had expected to reach that night. He seemed to hate to go away so the next morning, that your grandfather asked him to come and see him again—and he took him at his word, and came back the very next week. This time he didn't hide from anybody what he came for, for he courted your mother in good earnest, and never left

her, or gave her any peace, till she had promised to be his wife, which I believe she was very willing to be, from the first night she saw him."

"Nay, Aunt Patty," said Mrs. Worth, "I must correct you in some of your items; your imagination is a little too vivid."

Edmund went behind his mother's chair, and putting his hands playfully over her ears, begged Aunt Patty to go on, and give her imagination full scope.

"And show us the wedding-dress, and tell us all about it," said Bessy. "It is pleasanter to hear of mother's wedding, than Parson Broomfield's funeral."

"But that's the way, darling—a funeral and a wedding, a birth and a death, all mixed up, the world over. We must take things as they come, and be thankful for all. Do you see this white sprigged satin, and this bit of white lace? The wedding-dress was made of the satin, and trimmed round the neck and sleeves with the lace, and the money it cost would have clothed a poor family for a long time. But your grandfather said he had but one daughter, and she should be well fitted out, if it cost him all he had in the world. And, moreover, he had a son-in-law, whom he would not exchange for any other man in the universe. When Emma, your mother that is, was dressed in her bridal finery, with white blossoms in her hair, which hung in ringlets down her rosy cheeks, you might search the country round for a prettier and fairer bride—and your father looked like a prince. Parson Broomfield said they were the handsomest couple he ever married—and, bless his soul, they were the last. He was taken sick a week after the wedding, and never lifted his head afterwards. It is a blessed thing Emma was married when she was, for I wouldn't want to be married by any other minister in the world than Parson Broomfield."

"Where's your husband, Aunt Patty?" said Estelle, suddenly.

Edmund and Bessy laughed outright. Emma only smiled—she feared Aunt Patty's feelings might be wounded.

"I never had any, child," replied she, after taking a large pinch of snuff.

"What's the reason?" persevered Estelle.

"Hush—Estelle," said her mother, "little girls must not ask so many questions."

"I'll tell you the reason," cried Aunt Patty, "for I'm never ashamed to speak the truth. No one ever thought of marrying me, for I was a lame, helpless, and homely girl without a cent of money to make folks think one pretty whether I was or not. I never dreamed of having sweethearts, but was thankful for friends, who were willing to bear with my infirmities, and provide for my comfort. I don't care if they do call me an old maid. I'm satisfied with the place Providence has assigned me, knowing it's a thousand times better than I deserve. The tree that stands alone by the wayside offers shelter and shade to the weary traveller. It was not created in vain, though no blossom nor fruit may hang upon its boughs. It gets its portion of the sunshine and dew, and the little birds come and nestle in its branches."

"That is such a beautiful image of Aunt Patty's," whispered Bessy; "I know whom she means by the tree and the little birds. But tell me, mother," continued she, passing her arm fondly round her neck, and looking up smilingly in her face, "how can anybody love anybody as well as their own father and mother? How can they be willing to go away from home, where they have lived all their lives, to a strange place, with a stranger, too, whom they have never seen but a little while before? I'm sure I wouldn't go away from you, and father, and home, if they piled up gold enough to reach the skies to tempt me."

Mrs. Worth passed her arm round the waist of her beautiful child, and asked herself whether the time would ever arrive, when she would feel willing to transfer such a treasure to the bosom of another. Her heart imperatively answered, No! and she wondered at the power which had drawn her, as if by enchantment, from the home of her youth. She found it difficult to explain to the simplicity of childhood the influence of that master passion, before which the ties of nature yield like flax in the flame; but taking advantage of Bessy's love of metaphor, she brought the truth to her mind, through the medium of her imagination.

"You were pleased with Aunt Patty's simile of the tree and little birds," said she. "Have you never noticed, Bessy, that when the birds are very young, and the feathers thin, and the wings weak, they nestle close to the parent bird, without thinking of flying into the blue air, and seeking the

world beyond. But, by and by, their wings grow strong, and covered with beautiful shining feathers. They long to try their strength, and they fly away to build nests of their own. And if they meet some sweet warbler in the way, they are very apt to go in company, and sing and work together."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Bessy, "I remember that beautiful ballad about the blackbird, who chose his mate, and was killed by a gunner in the vale. Do you recollect that sweet verse, after the bridegroom saw the danger?

> "Alarm'd, the lover cried, 'My dear,
> Haste, haste away, from danger fly—
> Here, gunner, turn thy vengeance here,
> Oh! spare my love, oh let me die.'
> At him the huntsman took his aim—
> The aim he took was, ah! too true."—

Bessy's voice choked. The sorrows of the widowed bird opened the sluices of her sympathy, and she could not go on.

"Well," said Edmund, kindly wishing to divert her attention, and not disposed to laugh at her sensibility, "if we are all birds, let us see what kind of ones we are. Homer is the eagle, because he's ambitious, and wants to be a great man. Yes, he shall be the 'bird of Jove, with thunder in his train.' You know that charming poem of Montgomery's, where he compares Burns to all the birds of the air. Emma is 'in tenderness the dove'—and Bessy,

> 'Oh! more than all beside, is she
> The nightingale in love.'

Little Estelle is the humming-bird,

> 'From flower to flower,
> Exhaling sweet perfume.'

"Don't you think, mother, we make a charming aviary for you?"

"But you've left out yourself, brother," said Emma, 'the best of the whole,—what will you be?"

"Oh! he shall be the bird of paradise," interrupted Bessy; "the most beautiful of all; and I think Homer ought to be the owl,—he's so moping and fond of being alone. Then father can be the eagle. But what will mother be?"

"Never mind me, children," observed the mother,—

"but you must not give such an emblem to Homer,—he would not like it, were he to hear it; and even in jest you must always beware of wounding the feelings of each other. He stays alone in his own room that he may study without interruption; for you know he enters college in the autumn. He is ambitious, as Edmund says, and whoever becomes a great man, must first be a studious youth."

Though the rain continued unabated, the evening passed off cheerily round a glowing fire. They forgot the dismal scenery abroad, in the contemplation of their in-door comforts. It is not to be supposed that Aunt Patty had exhausted the store-house of memory, because we have interrupted the thread of her discourse. Scherezade herself could not excel her in the number and variety of her domestic histories; and after supper was over, and the other children seated round the table at their different occupations of reading and sewing, she sat in a corner with Estelle at her knees, entertaining her with her scrap erudition.

Ought any thing to be regarded as insignificant or ridiculous, that draws the mind from the narrow limits of self, opens the avenues of human sympathy, and adds to the sum of human happiness? Is not Aunt Patty, the lonely, crippled, and infirm, thus distilling the honey of life from its waste flowers and weeds, an object worthy of admiration and respect?

CHAPTER III.

The children were faithful to the duties their father enjoined upon them in his parting words, and the good angel of the mail was seldom allowed to depart without bearing tokens of love to the wayfaring man. They had frequent tidings of him, as he pursued his journey safely and prosperously in spite of wind or weather. Whenever it was announced that a letter from *Father* had arrived, there was a full concert of joyous sounds, and an eager rushing to the mother's side, while she read the precious communication. Aunt Patty always put on her spectacles and took a pinch

of snuff, to hear it the better, and a beam of satisfaction even lighted up the misanthropic brow of Homer, for he venerated his father, and remembered his farewell counsel. Mr. Worth had not yet reached the end of his journey, but he improved every pause to hold communion with the beings, more endeared, if possible, by absence and increasing distance. His letters were sterling gold from the heart's treasury. They were fraught with breathings of affection, emanations of soul, counsels of wisdom, admonitions of love, tender reminiscences of the past, and kindling hopes of the future. They were sometimes addressed to his wife alone. In these the gallantry of the lover, a dash of the chivalrous spirit of olden times, mingled with the confiding tenderness of the husband, and gave a charm to his letters that a woman only could appreciate. Sometimes they were addressed to his *Wife & Co.;* and it was pleasing to see how perfectly he could adapt himself to the peculiarities of every juvenile mind, from the sensitive pride of Homer, to the infantine simplicity of Estelle. The answers to these letters were so characteristic of the young writers, that we cannot but think they will prove interesting to the reader. We will give a few specimens, believing them the living transcripts of the youthful mind. Homer never suffered his brother or sisters to read his epistles, and of course he would not allow a stranger's eye to scan the lines. We will begin with Edmund, whose thoughts, clear and bright as the sun, were open to the scrutiny of all. Edmund was the most unselfish of human beings. It will be observed how seldom he speaks of himself.

EDMUND'S LETTER TO HIS FATHER.

"Dearest Father:—Your letter, received last night, was a family feast. We all gathered round mother with hungry ears to hear it; and sweet as her voice always is, it never sounded sweeter than it did then. You describe every thing so minutely, we feel as if we were with you, and I now know how true it is, what you said about letter-writing. Every thing that takes place, we think, 'That will interest father: we will be sure to put that in our next letter,'—but when we have the pen in hand, and see it on paper, it doesn't appear half as well. I have been reading a great deal, and study-

ing too. I want to tell you how much I have read in Greek and Latin, when you return, and how far I have got in mathematics. But I ought not to speak of my studying by the side of Homer: he is at his books from morning till night, and, I have no doubt, will be a very great man one of these days. We go to Mr. Farnham's office every day to recite, though the mud is sometimes up to our knees. You have reached better regions than ours, or poor Faithful would be lost in the slough of despondency. Of all months in the year, I believe March is the most dismal:—it is neither spring nor winter, but the mud and the snow seem fighting all the time. Bessy saw a little patch of green grass yesterday, peeping out on the edge of the pond, (she calls it lake,) on the south side of the house, and she called us all from the four points of the compass, to come and worship the first herald of spring. O father, I have a secret to tell you, but you must not breathe it to the winds, lest they should bear it back to Bessy's ear. I found a paper the other day, covered with certain strange characters, which, upon examining closely, I discovered to be verses of poetry, crossed and recrossed,—but real genuine rhymes, in Bessy's handwriting. She actually cried when I showed them to her, and would not be pacified till I gave them up. They were upon your absence, and some of the lines were very pretty. I recollect two or three:—

'O father, dear! why thus your stay prolong?
The days are darksome, and seem twice as long;
Whene'er I look upon the setting sun
I think of you, and wish your journey done;
And, though I loved you, dearly loved before,—
I do believe I love you more and more.'

Now don't you think our azure-eyed Bessy will be a poetess by-and-by? Her eyes have the true poetical, upward turn, and she never sees a volume of poems without a bright glow of delight on her cheeks. Emma has not been as well as usual for a few days: she caught cold, and has a troublesome cough. I often fear that she is too good for this world,—too gentle, and too weak; I don't believe Emma ever told an untruth, or committed an evil act in her whole life: she always seems thinking about heaven. I must not forget to tell you an anecdote of Estelle:—the other day I found her weeping in a little corner by herself;

it was a long time before she would tell me what was the matter with her; at last she said she was afraid she was going to die. 'Why, little Estelle, you look the picture of health!' 'Because,—cause,' answered she, sobbing, 'I heard Aunt Patty tell somebody I was too smart to live long.' Really, dear father, she is the most amusing little creature you ever knew,—she and Aunt Patty together; I mean Aunt Patty is amusing too, in her odd way,—and is she not the best and kindest of human beings, always excepting my beloved mother? I cannot bear to leave you, dear father, but I have promised Emma the other half of the sheet, as we write together, and I will not encroach on her limits, as she always follows the golden rule, without deviating one hair's-breadth. I find I have done it already, for there is only one page left. I cannot help it now, so pray forgive me, and believe me your affectionate son,

"EDMUND."

"Dear and beloved Father:—Edmund wrote the above, two or three days ago, and I would have finished it immediately, but company came so very unexpectedly. The riding is so bad we never thought of seeing a human being,—but just as we were all nicely seated round the evening fire, and all of us feeling so quiet and happy,—that is, as happy as we can be without you, a carriage drove up into the yard, and we could not think who it was. It was Mr. and Mrs. Wharton, with Francis and Laura, all on their way home to Boston, from a visit to a friend who lives far in the country, where they have been detained a long time. You remember, they stopped here when they were going, and it was good sleighing, and they were all wrapped up in buffalo-skins, and their horses had more strings of bells than I ever saw before. They were obliged to leave their sleigh and return in a carriage, and they are going to rest here several days. We were very glad to see them, for they are so lively and agreeable: but I don't think I ever would be tired of being with ourselves, alone. I love stillness, and I love home just for itself, and because we can do just as we please; and when any one is visiting here, we must give up our usual pursuits, and do every thing to entertain the company. I am afraid I am very selfish, and will try to correct myself. They have all indulged me so much, and been so kind and

tender, there is great danger of my thinking more than I ought of my own gratification. They always give me the warmest seat in the room, because I am apt to take cold; if we ride abroad, I must always wear the warmest cloak or shawl, and I must ride oftener than anybody else, because, they say, the exercise will strengthen me:—and I can do so little in return for them. Edmund is the kindest brother that ever was in the world: I believe he would walk barefoot to the end of the universe, if his mother or sisters asked him. Francis Wharton seems a good boy, but he is not like Edmund,—he is more boisterous and rude. I cannot think what pleasure there is in making a noise: it only gives me a headache. Laura is a very fashionable little Miss, and, I have no doubt, thinks me quite a dowdy. Bessy admires her very much, and she says Bessy is a great beauty. Oh! I hope you will come home very soon, for we all long to see you so much. My heart aches to be near you once more,—to feel your kind hand on my head, and your good-night kiss on my cheek. Dearest father, if it is so hard to part from friends for a little time here, how can we ever leave them, and think we shall never, never return?"—— Here a tear, which blotted the next word, indicated a sad foreboding in the heart of the young invalid.

Bessy had the privilege of writing with red ink, cross-ways, in her mother's letter; and it was a colour suited well to her glowing imagination.

"Dear Father," said she, "it is a pity that I am younger than Edmund and Emma, for they tell you all the news before my turn comes. Fanny Wharton has told me so many beautiful things about the city, it makes me long to visit it. She goes to the theatre very often, and she says every thing seems just like a fairy-tale, so brilliant and changing all the time. Father, if you get very rich while you are gone, you must take us all to the theatre and museum, and to see all the fine things in all the cities. I don't think I should care any thing about balls and parties, but I do want to see those bright, strange things, such as I dream about so often.—Oh! I had such a wonderful dream, I must relate it: you told me I might write a dream, if I hadn't any thing else to say. I thought I saw a large clock,—so large, that it reached up to the skies, and it went

down, all out of sight; the hands looked as big as iron bars, and when it struck, it sounded as loud as thunder. Every time it struck, it said '*Time, Time, Time,*'—so deep and solemn, it made me feel trembling all over. Wasn't that a strange dream for a little girl like me? Aunt Patty says, it means that something great is going to happen to me. I know, when I went to bed that night, I laid awake, thinking how strange it was that we were in this world now, and wouldn't be here by-and-by, and trying to think what the difference was between time and eternity. It seemed to me,—and perhaps it was very wicked,—that if I thought about it long enough, I could find out how it was, that God never began to be. Every night these thoughts came upon me, and, I cannot help it, I lie and look up to the moon and stars, and things come into my mind that I never read or heard about, and it seems as if angels told them to me. Estelle just came to me and said, 'Tell father, Aunt Patty don't give me too much to eat,—I don't mean to be an animal.' A lady called here yesterday to see Mrs. Wharton, who offended Aunt Patty very much. 'Why, how homely little Estelle grows,' said she; 'she is really getting quite course.' 'Ask the lady to look in the glass,' said Aunt Patty. Everybody laughed, and the lady didn't look pleased,—she wasn't pleased with any thing. 'Why, Emma is quite deformed,' said she; 'one shoulder is larger than the other.' 'I'd rather have a crooked back than a crooked mind,' retorted Aunt Patty. You know poor Emma is weak, and cannot sit very straight; and I think it was cruel to say any thing to hurt her feelings. I thought the lady had a very cross look, and, as she was squint-eyed, perhaps she couldn't see right. Oh! pray forgive this big blot, for Frank Wharton pushed my arm on purpose, because I wouldn't get up and play with him. Please write me a letter all to myself, that I can keep; and I will keep it so precious, no one shall know its place. You don't know how much we all love you—

"Farewell! my tongue or pen can never tell
The flames of love that in my bosom dwell.

"BESSY."

Bessy, like most juvenile poets, was prone to extravagance in her expressions of affection, but her father knew

how to appreciate them; and, doubtless, these artless effusions were priceless in his estimation.

Shall we follow the wife to her lonely chamber, whither she has retired after the children have separated for the night, and steal a glance at the sheet on which she is pouring out her soul unto her husband? There, like the lovely Geraldine, "all in her night-robe loose, she sits reclined," "o'er her dear bosom strays her hazle hair," while she traces on the silent page before her the thoughts she had been garnering up through the day. Foolish children! to think their mother would steal all the stirring incidents of the day, and leave them nothing to relate. That page is the heart's scroll unrolled,—a tablet of pure, elevated, kindling thoughts, and warm, deep, yea, unfathomable love,—a love far more deep and intense than when, in Aunt Patty's legend, she stood in white satin and lace, the handsomest bride Parson Bloomfield ever united in the holy bands of matrimony. Angels guard thee in thy retirement, thou faithful wife and tender mother! We will not invade thy hallowed sanctuary. Thy lamp is the last that glimmers on the darkness of the neighbourhood; and many an eye that looks up from a sick and restless pillow on the mystery of night, blesses thee; and many a sad heart likens thee to that cheering ray.

CHAPTER IV.

Frank and Laura Wharton remained several weeks with their young country friends, in consequence of the almost impassable state of the roads. There were two members of the family who lamented their protracted stay,—Homer, who always looked upon strangers with distrust and dislike, and Emma, whose feeble nerves shrunk from contact with those whose animal spirits effervesced so boisterously as Frank's, and whose refined simplicity was little pleased with the fine-lady airs of Laura. Edmund's joyous nature found something congenial in the gayety and warmth of Frank's character, and Bessy's ardent imagina-

tion was completely captivated by Laura's over-wrought description of theatrical splendours and fashionable amusements. Mrs. Worth saw, with some maternal fear, this new influence exercised on her daughter's susceptible mind, but she trusted it would pass away like one of her own vivid dreams. Mrs. Wharton had been the friend of her youth, but though a very charming maiden, she did not prove a judicious mother,—believing excessive indulgence a parent's crowning glory.

"I never had the heart to deny my children any thing," she would often say to her friend. "You have more resolution than I have. I should fear to lose their affection, if I refused to gratify their wishes."

"Do you not think *my* children love me?" asked Mrs. Worth.

"Yes: I never saw children so affectionate or obedient: a look from you has more effect than a thousand words from me. But your children are very different from mine. You must have perceived how very difficult mine are to manage."

Mrs. Worth smiled. She believed all children difficult to manage, who were not accustomed to be controlled from infancy; and she felt very certain, that if the superfluous energy of Frank, and the luxuriant taste of Laura, had been earlier restrained and directed, they would only have strengthened and adorned the characters they now threatened to deform.

At length a mild, bright, genial morning succeeded to a week of clouds and east winds. Glimpses of green were seen on the edges of streams, that now rolled in the gladness of vernal freedom, reflecting in their waters the intense blue of a cloudless sky. Here and there a large flock of swallows floated like a dark wave overhead, showing that the "time of singing-birds was coming," and that the winged wanderers were all about to return from a more southern clime. Bessy ran into the room in a perfect glow of rapture. "Look, mother," exclaimed she, holding up a pale, small, delicate blue flower, unprotected by a single green leaf, "I have found the first flower of Spring. Here is a Houstonia cerulea, that I have plucked in yonder field It looked like a star shining through the darkness."

"Really, Bessy," said Frank, laughing loudly, "one

would think you had found a string of diamonds, or a purse of gold, instead of this little, old, pinched flower."

"She talks as if she had found an exotic," said Laura.

Bessy blushed, and thought it very likely, that in comparison with the exotics of the greenhouse, her little spring flower would dwindle into insignificance. She felt ashamed of her enthusiasm, and the glow faded from her cheek.

"Let us all take a walk and gather flowers," said Edmund, "Bessy's star shall guide us on our way."

This proposition was hailed with joy by the youthful party, and Bessy forgot her mortification in the excitement of the preparation. Emma, whose delicacy of health precluded her from such an enjoyment at this season of the year, shawled and bonnetted the little Estelle, who kept jumping up and down the whole time, making the operation almost impracticable, in the exuberance of her glee. She lingered on the threshold, after the gay pedestrians had departed, till their merry laugh died on her ear, then turned away with a sigh. The soft, blue sky, the murmur of the rivulet, the song of the birds, and the April flower, instead of exciting her spirits to buoyancy and mirth, filled her heart with a tender sadness, which longed to gush forth in tears. The gay sports of childhood—the long walk in the open air —"the hop, skip and jump," in which young and elastic limbs delight, were not for her.

"I wish I were strong and healthy," said she, seating herself again near the fire, and pressing her hand on her aching side; "one must be so happy when they can forget the body, and let it do just as it pleases."

Homer, who was the only person then present, and who was leaning over a book, with his hand placed over both ears, to exclude every noise, turned hastily round at the sound of her voice, for he did not like to be interrupted; there was a frown upon his brow, and an impatient motion of the lip. But there was something in the drooping attitude of Emma, and her pale, dejected countenance, that appealed to his sympathy, and painfully recalled his father's parting words. She was gazing in the fire, and large tears slowly chased each other down her cheeks. "Emma, what is the matter?" said he, taking a seat by her side—"what makes you look so sorrowful? Surely you don't care about walking with that boisterous Frank and his silly little sister."

Emma was touched by the unusual kindness of Homer's manner, and her tears flowed faster. "I don't know what is the matter with me," said she, "only I am nervous and foolish, and, I am afraid, selfish too. For when I heard them so merry and laughing, I felt as if I must cry, or my heart would break. O brother, you don't know how hard it is, when one is so very young, to feel as weak and languid as I do sometimes; and to think, too, that I may never live to be much older."

"Don't talk so, Emma, don't. You know you have been better than ever this winter, and when the weather gets warm, and you can ride abroad more, and walk in the garden, and attend to the flowers, you will be in better spirits."

"But I am so useless," said Emma, "yet everybody is so kind to me. I sometimes feel very willing to die; and think it is a beautiful thing to die young, before one knows any thing of the wickedness of the world. Then, again, to leave every one we love, and lie down alone in the cold grave—oh! it's a dreadful thought!"

Emma involuntarily gave expression to feelings which had often chilled her veins at the midnight hour, and saddened her noonday meditations. She so seldom spake of her sufferings and fears, that Homer was greatly shocked and affected by her desponding expressions. He felt drawn towards her by a tenderness such as he had never felt before, and resolved that he would henceforth endeavour to contribute to her happiness and comfort. He had always stood aloof from his brothers and sisters, refusing to share in their joys or their sorrows, till they ceased to look for his participation in either. Emma, sad and sickly, left behind, because unable to unite in the active enjoyments of childhood, became, from this moment, a thousand times dearer to him than the blooming Bessy, or rosy Estelle. He put his arm soothingly round her, a caressing motion so strange in the cold, repelling Homer, that Emma lifted her eyes wonderingly to his face to prove his identity.

"You must not give way to such gloomy thoughts, Emma," said he; "that noisy Frank has given you a headache, and made you nervous and weak. When I am a man, and father gets the fortune he has gone to secure, I mean to have a house of my own, and you shall come and live with me. Edmund will be a fine gentleman, and carry Bessy into the

great world, and show her the theatres and museums that Laura tells so much about, but you and I despise such things, and we'll live together, and have nothing to do with the rest of the world. We'll have a library as large as the Alexandrian library, and fine pictures and statues from Europe. I would like a wall built round the house, and a drawbridge that would lift up, so that no one could enter unless we chose to admit them."

"But don't you mean to marry when you get old enough, Homer," asked Emma, her spirits reviving at the unusual kindness of the young misanthropist.

"No, never," answered he, with a look of scorn, "I would as soon live in Aunt Patty's scrap-bag. All women are foolish, except my mother."

"But, perhaps, some of the little girls may grow wise enough for you, Homer, by the time you are ready," said Emma, now smiling through her tears. "Who knows but that Laura Wharton may be a wise woman yet? I heard her say, she thought you a great deal handsomer than Edmund, and that she expected you would make a great man."

"You know she never said that of me," replied Homer, angrily, "except in ridicule. I had rather any one would stab me than laugh at me."

"No, indeed, brother; she said it to Frank, when she did not know any one heard her. And he laughed, and said you had as much beauty as a thunder-cloud."

A gleam, like lightning, darted across the 'thunder-cloud.' It was a pleasant thing to be thought superior to Edmund, even by Frank's silly little sister. Homer, in this interview, had manifested two unwonted human emotions; sympathy for sorrow, and susceptibility to praise.

In the mean time, the young pedestrians continued their morning walk, rejoicing. Even the little city maiden, who was too genteel to wear any thing but kid shoes, which were soon sadly soiled by the mud, forgot her measured pace, and bounded and ran with the rest. If they saw a green patch on the dark ground-work of the soil, there was a simultaneous shout, and a rush towards the spot, striving to see who should reach it first. Edmund always reached the goal first, though Frank was the first to start, and was sure to push down some one in his way, whether accidentally or intentionally it is difficult to solve. Once he overturned Estelle,

and threw her flat on her face in the mud, bending the wire of her bonnet in such a grotesque manner, it threw him into convulsions of laughter.

"Oh! Frank, how can you be so rude," cried Bessy, wiping the dirt from Estelle's cheeks and nose; "see how you have spoiled her pretty bonnet."

Frank, who was as good-natured as he was thoughtless, checked his mirth at the sight of Estelle's tears, and insisted upon carrying her in his arms, as an expiation for the offence. The only vengeance which Estelle threatened was to tell Aunt Patty; and when Frank put on a rueful look of penitence, she promised to remit even that.

"Let us walk to Madame Le Grande's," said Edmund, "Laura will be delighted with her, she is so fashionable, and a French lady besides."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Laura, "I know from her name she must be charming. Has she any daughters?"

"Only one," answered Edmund, "a very accomplished young lady, named Victorine."

"Oh! what a beautiful name!" cried Laura, "I long to see her. But why didn't you tell me sooner? I have on only an every-day frock, and I couldn't think of calling there now."

"Never mind," said Frank, "Madame Le Grande and Mademoiselle Victorine both will excuse it. People who live in great style are never as particular in their dress as others."

"Must we parlez-vous François to Mademoiselle Victorine, or does she understand English well?" asked Frank, laughing.

"She can speak both languages fluently," replied Edmund, "it makes no difference which you use."

Here Laura made a full pause by the wayside, to arrange her dress and smooth her hair before presenting herself to the fashionable Madame Le Grande. Bessy very good naturedly assisted her in her toilet, though she seemed excessively amused at her superfluous anxiety about her personal appearance. Sometimes she would shake back her own golden ringlets, from her smiling eyes and glowing cheeks, and burst into a merry peal of laughter, in which Estelle joined; but Edmund looked grave, and told them Mademoiselle Victorine never laughed loud.

"There is Madame Le Grande's," exclaimed he, as a low, faded white cottage appeared, situated far back from the road-side, with a dark railing in front, which ran along, unbroken by a gate.

"*That* Madame Le Grande's," cried Laura, with a look of astonishment; "I thought you said she lived in great style."

"But you have not seen the inside. You know the French don't pay so much attention to the outside of the houses as the English."

The children were obliged to jump over the railing for want of a gate, and were soon at the door of the cottage.

"I never should dream of such a great lady as Madame Le Grande's living in such a little, old place as this," said Laura.

"But it is beautiful in summer," cried Bessy; "only look, Laura, what a charming prospect there is, even now."

The children looked back upon a landscape, on which some faint traces of vernal beauty were beginning to steal over the bleakness of departing winter. The river, graceful in its continuous undulations, rolled sparkling and shining through the meadows and fields, reflecting the blue of the sky; and, melting into that beauteous blue, was seen the soft outline of distant mountains, girdling the valley with an azure zone.

"Is it not lovely?" repeated Bessy, with growing enthusiasm. "But if you saw it in summer, when the trees are all covered with green leaves, and the fields are all green, and the flowers spring up here and there, and everywhere, and the fruit hangs on the boughs, you would say you never saw any thing so beautiful in all your life."

Here the door opened, and the tide of Bessy's eloquence was arrested by the ample person of Madame Le Grande herself. Laura, who had prepared to make her handsomest dancing-school courtesy, stood rigid with astonishment at the extraordinary figure which met her gaze. Madame Le Grande was dressed in the fashion of the last century, but the original colour of her robe it was impossible to determine, as it seemed to have been worn for years, without passing through the customary ablutions. She wore a turban of dirty yellow, which looked coeval with her dress, and her dingy brown hair defied, in its tangles, the aid of brush or comb. Her complexion might have been fair, but

it was brown with the accumulated soil and dust of time. Indeed, she was well worthy of the name by which she was universally known—the queen of slovens. Yet, beneath this disgusting exterior, she carried the native graces of a Frenchwoman, and invited her young guests to enter, with smiles and bows, that would have graced a city drawing-room. Frank took off his hat, and bowed down to the ground; but Laura, casting an indignant glance at Edmund, made no acknowledgment of the lady's politeness. She pressed her frock close to her, as she passed through the door, which she entered, after the others, led on by an impulse of irrepressible curiosity. The parlour, or sitting-room, or boudoir, or whatever name it bore, was indeed furnished in a most original manner, and occupied by original guests. A young girl about Bessy's age was seated by the fire, embroidering a dingy green shawl, with parti-coloured crewel. A young pig was crouched at her feet, in a loving position. and on a large table on her left was reposing eight or nine young cats and kittens, which looked as if they lived in the chimney, so begrimmed with soot and smoke were their once white and silky coats. Some very familiar and domestic looking hens were walking about the room, occasionally picking corn from the floor, evidently scattered there for their accommodation. A gentleman, dressed in a suit of faded black, sat on the other side of the fireplace, so intent upon a book, in which he was reading, that he did not at first notice the entrance of the juvenile visitors. But when he raised his head, he discovered a countenance so benign and intelligent, a forehead so high and commanding, an eye so bright and winning, that in spite of his strange accompaniments, he won, instantaneously, the respect which is a gentleman's due. The young girl, who was Mademoiselle Victorine, laid her embroidery frame by the side of the cats, and asked the young ladies to be seated. Her appearance was as singular as her mother, but there was not the slightest personal resemblance. Her eyes were of a deep, brilliant black, and her long hair, of the same hue, hung in matted tresses down her back. The ground-work of her frock had once been white, but it had lost all its original purity, and large bunches of flowers were dimly seen delineated on the dusky expanse. It was remarkable to see the ease and grace with which this strange

and grotesque-looking girl accosted her guests, and acted the part of a hostess.

Edmund and Bessy, who were familiarized to the mysteries of this singular household, enjoyed the silent wonder of Frank and Laura, who looked as bewildered as if they were plunged in the midst of a menagerie. By the side of the table of cats was an old-fashioned harpsichord, and over it were several rows of bookshelves, filled with classic works. That Monsieur Le Grande was a scholar, was evident from the authors which he had selected; that Mademoiselle Victorine was an accomplished child, seemed as evident from the embroidery frame and harpsichord, and Madame Le Grande had the manners of a lady of the first rank. And yet they lived among animals, in the midst of congenial elements, regardless of the comforts and decencies of life, apparently as contented and happy as the inmates of a palace.

"We have a great many pets," said Madame Le Grande, looking smilingly round on her dumb favourites, "but I could not spare one of the dear creatures!"

"I would not give Fidele for all of them," cried Victorine, caressing a little shaggy dog, that just emerged from a heap of rubbish, and leaped barking into her lap.

"Let us go," whispered Laura to Bessy, "it makes me sick to see so much dirt."

When the children rose to depart, Madame Le Grande loaded their handkerchiefs with apples and nuts, which they said they would carry home and divide with Emma.

When they left the house, Laura reproached Edmund and Bessy for deceiving her so, declaring that she would rather starve than eat any thing that came out of such a den of wild beasts. Frank was in boisterous spirits; and pretended to be in raptures with Victorine, asserting that she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

"She would be beautiful," said Bessy, "if she were dressed nice, and kept her hair smooth, and her face fair; she makes me think of the stories I have read about gipsies, with her shining black eyes and coal black hair."

"But what makes them live in such a dirty old place, among the pigs, and cats, and dogs?" asked Laura. "I don't think Christian people ought to visit them."

"You must get Aunt Patty to tell you all she knows about them," replied Edmund. "She has a scrap of Vic-

torine's flowered frock; and if you can only draw that out of her bag, the family history will come with it. I have heard my father say that Monsieur Le Grande was one of the most intelligent, well-informed gentlemen he ever met with; and that he would be an ornament to any society. They are very wealthy, and extremely kind to the poor."

"One of these days," said Frank, "when I get to be a man, I mean to come back and see Mademoiselle Victorine: I will learn her how to wash her face and comb her hair, and make a fine lady of her."

The idea of Victorine's taking toilet lessons of Frank, amused the children excessively; and as the springs of mirth, when once touched, are apt to vibrate long in the breast of childhood, they continued to laugh till they reached the threshold of home.

In the evening, when the children were discoursing the events of the day, Laura reminded Edmund of his promise, to tell them something more about the strange, dirty family they had visited in the morning.

"Oh! Aunt Patty must tell you," replied Edmund; "she is the historian of the town. But she must produce her scrap-bag first, for she keeps her memory tied up with her pieces."

This was a request which Aunt Patty never refused; and she was soon seated in the midst of a circle of smiling faces. Estelle sat on a little stool at her feet, holding her snuff-box in her left hand, with the right extended, ready to plunge in the opening reservoir. Emma sat quietly near; the tears of the morning, exhaled in the sunshine of Homer's kindness, had left a soft glow on her cheek, delicate as the hue of the rose when the dew has just dried on its petals. Bessy leaned over her lap so close that the rich foliage of her waving hair shaded the fair tints of her sister's face, while it seemed to glorify her own. Nothing could be more charming than the young group that surrounded Aunt Patty—the sibyl of the evening. Laura, with her smooth, brown locks braided down her back, and tied at the ends with blue ribbon, formed a pleasing contrast to the two lovely sisters. And then Frank's round, laughing face, peeping over Edmund's shoulder, as if ready to penetrate the mysteries of the bag; and Edmund's brow, so fair and noble, and wearing that princely expression

peculiar to himself!—It was a family picture exhibited in the light a painter best loves. And how proud Aunt Patty looked, to be the cynosure of those starry eyes—the living focus of those rays of youth and beauty. She undrew the string of her scrap-bag, smiled, and nodded, patted Estelle on the head, then taking a large pinch of snuff, Edmund declared she sneezed out of the bag the identical sample of Victorine's frock, which was destined to be the subject of their evening's entertainment. Sure enough, it lay on the top of the pieces, conspicuous for its enormous flowers and gaudy colours.

"Tell us all about Victorine, Aunt Patty," said Frank. "Did she spring up there, among her cats and pigs, or has she lately come over from the great city of Paris?"

"You must let me begin in the right place," replied Aunt Patty, smoothing out the flowers on her knee, "or I never shall tell any thing straight. The first time I ever saw Victorine, it was about two years ago, and she had on this very frock——"

"And she's worn it ever since, I dare say," said Frank.

"Hush! Frank," said Laura; "you always interrupt one so."

"Well," continued Aunt Patty, "very likely she has, for the poor thing don't know any better. Her mother brings her up among the animals, and, as they don't change their coats, I suppose she thinks there is no occasion for her to change hers. One Sunday afternoon, just as the services closed, there came up a terrible storm of rain, and it thundered and lightened too. The carriage went home first with my niece Emma, Mrs. Worth that now is, and little Emma and Bessy. Edmund waited with me, for I was afraid to ride when it thundered, and we sat down in one of the pews till the carriage should return. Edmund got tired sitting still, and went up in the gallery, and walked about there at his leisure. Who should he see there, all by herself, but a little girl in a flowered frock and green bonnet, crying bitterly. He came down and told me what he had seen, and I sent him back to bring her to me, for it is hard work for me to hobble up stairs with my crutch. The poor thing came crying and hanging down her head, saying, she didn't know how to get home, and she thought she was all alone in the big church. I asked her where

she lived, and told her I would take her home when the carriage came, but that she needn't be afraid in the church, for it was no other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. It rained very hard when we left the church, and we had to go a roundabout way to carry the child home. The horses got restive, going backward and forward in the storm, and when we stopped to set her down, they wouldn't stand still, but arched their necks and frisked about in a frightful manner. The little girl jumped out like a squirrel, and Edmund leaped after her and tried to get at the horses' heads. But, quicker than lightning, they sprang up in the air, and overturned the carriage in a moment."

"Oh, Aunt Patty! didn't they kill you?" cried Estelle.

"Not quite, my darling. I knew nothing in the world till I found myself between a pair of sheets that Adam and Eve might have slept in, for aught I know: all the waters of the deluge wouldn't have made them clean. The wild, heathenish looking child was standing on one side of me, and a big woman in a yellow turban on the other. I tried to move, but I was so bruised and hurt I couldn't lift my hand to my head; and there I had to stay three days and nights."

"In those dreadful sheets?" asked Bessy.

"No, child; the first night I was there a blood-vessel broke, in consequence of my fall, and every thing round me was stained with the blood that flowed from my mouth. Your mother, who came to me, as soon as she heard of the accident, sent for clean linen and napkins, saying, she could not think of giving so much trouble to my kind hostess. And kind, indeed, she was; and so was little Victorine. They watched by me as if I were the dearest friend they had in the world; and I believe it is owing to the skilful nursing of Madame Le Grande that I am yet in the land of the living."

"I do believe," interrupted Laura, "that I would rather die than have that ugly, dirty woman, do any thing for me."

"She is not half as dirty as the damp grave and the earth-worm," replied Aunt Patty with solemnity. "I'll tell thee what, child, if you were lying in agony, thinking, perhaps, every hour might bring you into the presence of the Holy One of Israel, and all your sins passing before your eyes, dark and thick, you wouldn't be squeamish about the hands that smoothed your pillow, and held your aching

head. You would be thankful to be nursed by any one in the world, or your heart is harder than I think it is."

"I would like to know," said Frank, "what made Monsieur Le Grande, who is really a fine-looking gentleman, marry such a witch of Endor, as she is."

"I can tell you," said Aunt Patty, "for I heard him tell Mr. Worth all about it, one night, when I was there, and they thought I was asleep. They had been talking about books, and every thing one can think of, when Mr. Worth told him, that he wondered to see a man of his talents and education, willing to live so retired, and that he would assist him in choosing a situation more suited to his character. He said, all he wanted was leisure and retirement, and leave to do just as he pleased. "Madame Le Grande," said he, "has peculiar tastes, and so have I. We promised, when we married, not to interfere with each other, and not to let the world interrupt us. I was a poor young student, and she a rich widow, who, taking a fancy to me, poor as I was, asked me to marry her, and you know I could not refuse."

"Oh! how bold," exclaimed Bessy; "I shouldn't think a woman could be so bold."

"Nor I either," replied Aunt Patty with energy; "I wouldn't ask a man to have me if he was made of diamonds, and cased in gold. It is a sin and a shame, and a disgrace to the whole sex. If the truth were told, it is the way half the women get married, I do believe."

"So do I," said Frank, "and one of these days Victorine will ask me, and I will make a low bow, and say, Yes—I thank you, Mademoiselle, with all my heart."

The children all laughed at Frank, and at the impression the little French gipsy had made on his imagination. The rest of Aunt Patty's history was too discursive, and interrupted too often, to be able to follow it in a connected manner. Indeed, her youthful auditors manifested some symptoms of uneasiness before its close, and Estelle, falling fast asleep, suffered Aunt Patty's snuff-box to drop on the carpet, close by her kitten's nose, who ran round the room sneezing at every step.

In a few days, Mrs. Wharton and her children bade adieu to their friends, and departed for their city home. Laura and Bessy exchanged warm professions of friendship and promises of a regular correspondence. Frank

shocked Emma's refined sense of propriety, by giving Bessy and herself a loud kiss on the cheek, where modest roses flushed crimson at the unwonted freedom.

"Thank Heaven," exclaimed Homer, as the carriage rolled from the door.

"And thank Heaven," repeated the soft voice of Mrs. Worth, for at the same moment a letter arrived from her husband.

CHAPTER V.

It was autumn—mild, rich, golden autumn. The corn, emerging from its folding husks, stood ripening in the mel low sunshine; the vermilion apples glowed through the changing leaves; and the grapes hung in luxuriant clusters, through the slender lattice-work that supported the vines. And then, the harvest-moon! how full, how glorious was its light! as its silver wheel seemed to poise itself on high, to lengthen the day for the anxious husbandman. The Worth family contemplated that moon with throbbing hearts, for they knew it illumined the return of the beloved traveller. He had not been successful in securing the fortune, to which he had a just claim, and his last letter was written in a tone of unwonted sadness. Mrs. Worth felt some lawful and natural regrets at the downfal of their hopes, but they were soon merged in the thought of her husband's return. They had been so happy together before, why should they sigh for more abundant wealth? The children were too young to feel the full weight of disappointment. They cared for nothing but seeing their father once more, doubly endeared by long absence. Day after day they gathered under the meeting elms, which began to shed here and there a golden leaf, to watch for the approach of the stately figure, whose departure they had there lingered to behold. Mrs. Worth sat at the window that looked down the street, and every horseman, whose dark outline was defined in the horizon, made her heart throb quick, and her colour to come and "go with beatings" from that throbbing heart. She wondered at his delay. The exact day had never been appointed, for

ne had endeavoured to guard against disappointment, by speaking in indefinite terms. Still affection fixed on the earliest possible day, and apprehensions, always inseparable from such intense affection, sometimes flitted darkly before her imagination.

"I know father will be here to-day," exclaimed Bessy, "for I had such a beautiful dream last night. I dreamed that he came back, looking younger and handsomer than ever, and he had glorious wings on his shoulders; and he told us he was going to take us all to the loveliest country in the universe. Yet I felt sorry to hear him say so, for I knew I could never love any place so dearly as this, my own beautiful home."

"I don't think that was a good dream," said Aunt Patty, shaking her head solemnly, "I never dreamed of seeing anybody look like an angel but once, and that was Parson Broomfield, the night before he died. It is a bad sign. You shouldn't have looked after your father the morning he went away, children—I told you not to do it—that was another bad sign."

"Hush! Aunt Patty," said Edmund, observing Bessy's eyes fill with tears, and his mother turn very pale, notwithstanding she had no faith in dreams. "I will not allow of any bad signs about father's return. See, all nature is in smiles to welcome him back, and our hearts and faces ought all to be dressed in sunshine. Mark me, dear mother, for a true prophet. He will be here to-night before the harvest-moon goes down."

Mrs. Worth smiled, as she looked upon her son, the blooming personification of hope and joy. She looked at all her children, and thought they had all grown handsomer and taller during their father's absence. She remembered their filial devotion, and thought how it would gladden his heart to hear its recital. And Homer, too! gloomy and misanthropic still, but ever affectionate to her, and oftimes kind to Emma. She could present her dark-browed boy to his father, and tell him, that his parting words had not been uttered in vain. That though the evil spirit had not departed, like that which possessed the bosom of Saul, it could be charmed with the music of love. Her eye wandered into the garden, and rested on the fragrant grapes, which were not allowed to be culled, till father's hand had gathered

the fairest and best; on the autumnal flowers, whose blending purple, crimson, and yellow, emulated the rainbow dyes, and which were also reserved for the paternal eye. then turned towards the heavens, so soft and cloudless, in the day's declining glory, and she felt as if every thing breathed of welcome, hope, and joy. She closed her eyes in a kind of blissful revery, and the sweet remembrances of youthful love came vividly back upon her soul. Softly she glided backward on the stream of time, and smiling images rose upon its banks, passed long ago, now brought nearer and nearer, brighter and still more bright. The scenes of her blooming girlhood, her sunny bridal hours, melted away into the mother's joys and cares, the wife's time-hallowed tenderness. A flood of gratitude and sensibility flowed over her heart. She was lost to surrounding objects, and started as from the musings of a dream, when Homer touched her on the shoulder, holding a letter in his hand.

"A letter!" exclaimed she, the chill of disappointment freezing her warm hopes. She took it hastily, without noticing the unusually gloomy brow of her first-born. It was a stranger's hand; but the postmark bore the name of her husband's southern residence. It was sealed with black. Had a coffin been suddenly placed in the centre of that family group, it could not have caused a more shuddering sensation than that strange, black-sealed letter. "My God!" said Mrs. Worth, dropping it from her nerveless fingers, and her head leaned heavily on Homer's shoulder. Edmund sprang to her side, but Homer, feeling a stern joy in being his mother's first supporter in the mysterious trial that might await her, frowned upon his brother, and locked his arms closely round her. "Oh! mother!" exclaimed Bessy, wringing her hands, "what is the matter? How white she looks! How blue her lips! Emma, Emma, she is dying!" Estelle clung, weeping bitterly, to Aunt Patty; and Emma, pale and trembling, but self-possessed and thoughtful, ran into the house and brought hartshorn and cologne, and bathed her mother's death-like face, and cold hands. Edmund had taken the letter from the ground, and stood gazing at the black seal, till it seemed as if a black pall covered the whole scene. It was the first object which met Mrs. Worth's opening eyes. "Death, death!" she groaned—"There is death in that letter—I cannot open it."

"Perhaps, dear mother," cried Edmund with quivering lips, "it is an accident. This may have been written since father's departure, and the writer himself be in mourning."

"Open it," said she, faintly, "I cannot do it."

Edmund broke the seal, while the paper shook and rustled in his trembling fingers. He had scarcely read three lines, when, with a loud, heart-rending cry, he tossed the letter wildly from him, and buried his face in his mother's lap. That bitter cry was echoed again and again beneath the now desolate roof—the cry of orphanage and wo. Only one pale lip was silent, one breaking heart was still.

Speechless and tearless Mrs. Worth was borne to her room, in the arms of her weeping children. Speechless and tearless she lay, during the live-long night, with the bright harvest moon shining down into her chamber, as if in mockery of her unutterable grief. Kind neighbours came there for that wailing cry had been heard, and the whole village was soon covered with mourning. The common benefactor and friend was no more—the friend of the widow and the orphan—and they came to weep with the new-made widow and fatherless. He had died of one of the burning fevers of a southern clime, and his ashes reposed in a foreign soil.

Wretched, desolate family! plunged at once from such a height of hope to such an abyss of sorrow. How long was that first night of agony! How intolerable its silvery brightness. Edmund and Emma knelt on each side of their mother's couch, with their faces buried in the counterpane, which became literally saturated with their tears. Once in a while, they lifted their dimmed eyes to their mother's face, but it looked so white and ghastly in the still moonshine, they shuddered, and again veiled their brows. Bessy lay by her mother's side, her bright locks all dishevelled and drooping like the boughs of a weeping-willow. So terrific was the shock to one of her ardent temperament, that reason was for awhile unthroned. She seemed to hold intercourse with invisible beings, and smiled, and made beckoning motions with her fingers, and sometimes laughed aloud—a horrible sound in that chamber of mourning. Homer stood in the window, with dry and bloodshot eyes, which were fixed gloomily, and even fiercely, on the clear night-heaven, as if in defiance of the power that had crushed all other spirits low. He remembered the hour when his

soul had dissolved in a father's parting embrace—when his deep, solemn accents murmured in his ear, and he had committed to his charge so dear, so holy a trust. And now that revered form was cold and lifeless, that deep-toned voice was still, their home was indeed that of the widow and fatherless, and he must now be "their pillar and their shield." Though Homer sincerely mourned his father, whom he honoured above all human beings, a feeling of independence, of premature manhood, of superiority over Edmund, as the elder-born, the right of primogeniture investing him with something of paternal dignity, mingled strangely with his grief. "Oh, that I were a man!" cried he to himself, clenching his hands tightly over his forehead. "I will be one—I never will own another guardian. I myself will be the guardian of the household. My father thought me worthy of the trust."

Aunt Patty, though the kindest of human beings, knew nothing of those delicate shades of feeling, which constitute the perfection of a refined character. She knew of no sympathy but what is expressed in words. She unconsciously planted daggers in the hearts of the children, by asking the particulars of their father's death, unable herself to decipher a stranger's writing. She tried to console her niece, but finding her efforts vain, she sat down, with Estelle in her arms, who had sobbed herself to sleep, and was soon nodding wearily over her.

Weeks passed by, and, though wailing and lamentation had ceased, the sadness of the grave brooded over the household. The merry laugh, the bounding step were heard no more. The grapes hung withering on the vines; the apples fell unheeded to the ground; the flowers faded away, ungathered and forgotten; the yellow leaves of autumn fell faster and faster on the green grass that carpeted the yard, but no hand swept them away. Mrs. Worth moved about once more in the midst of her domestic duties,

> "But oh! with such a freezing eye,
> With such a curdling cheek—
> Love—love of mortal agony—
> Thou, only thou canst speak."

She had not yet shed one tear. The fountains of sorrow seemed frozen in her bosom. It was not till the traveller's trunks arrived, which he had packed with his own hands,

preparatory to his homeward journey, that the dry agony of grief found relief in tears. There were all the little memorials of love, which the absent one had collected for those who waited his return. Packets carefully folded, and bearing the loved names on the envelope. There was the bag of calico pieces, and Estelle's little kitten deposited in a corner of the trunk, and beneath the kitten a beautiful snuff-box. At sight of this proof of remembrance and kindness, even Aunt Patty wept aloud. Mrs. Worth turned from the gifts which had been selected with a refined regard to her peculiar tastes and character, to clasp to her bosom the garments he had worn, to cover them with her kisses and her tears. The sorrow so long imprisoned in her aching heart, now found impassioned utterance. She gathered her children alternately in her arms, and embraced them again and again, as if she feared they were to be torn from her by violence.

"Oh, my beloved ones!" cried she, "ye are orphans—sad, desolate orphans. He, who was my guide and my strength, as well as yours, is taken from us, to return no more for ever. Our once happy home is as a grave to us—the world nothing but a wilderness. Oh! that his grave were mine. He is gone; and with him life, joy, and hope."

"We are left, mother," said Edmund, in half-reproachful accents, "we are left to love, cherish, and protect you."

"Protect!" repeated Homer, looking darkly at Edmund; "to protect my mother is *my* right, and I will yield it to no one."

"God is left, dear mother," said Emma, softly, lifting upwards her meek, religious-beaming eyes, "he will never leave nor forsake thee. He will protect us all."

Homer turned aside, and dashed a tear from his haughty eye. He felt the pious rebuke of his gentle sister, and the accusing spirit was aroused in his bosom.

"Father of mercies!" exclaimed Mrs. Worth, bowing her head upon her hands, in the humility of a chastened and broken spirit, "forgive my impious murmurs, and give me strength to live for my children."

The widow's prayer was heard. Let it be supposed that several years have glided by, and see what changes they have marked in the family, which we have introduced in the bloom of childhood and adolescence.

CHAPTER VI.

After a lapse of three years, we will present another family picture to the eye of the reader, if it has not become weary of gazing at the last. Mrs. Worth is seated by the glowing fireside of a New England winter, whose warmth reflects a colour on her now pallid cheek. The sable dress, the thoughtful brow, the mild yet serious eye, proclaim that widowhood of the heart which time cannot change. Standing by her side, and leaning against the mantel-piece, is a tall, commanding looking youth, with dark, gloomy brow, and eyes of intense lustre. 'Tis Homer, by that gloomy brow, and those peculiar, beaming eyes. With his father's lofty stature, and unusual dignity of mien, he retains his own striking, misanthropic face—a face that exhibits only too faithfully the dark workings of his soul. His brother stands on the opposite side, less tall, less stately, but wearing, even in a more remarkable degree, that air of princely grace which distinguished his early boyhood. His hair and eyes are darkened; and were a painter to seek for a personification of that age when youth and manhood seem at strife, he could not rest upon a more engaging figure than that of Edmund Worth.

The brothers now meet at the maternal fireside. It is the college vacation, and consequently a holiday at the homestead. But where is the pale, spiritual-looking Emma, and the fair, sunny-tressed Bessy? Has death again entered the domestic circle and destroyed the sweet blossoms of childhood, as well as the strength and hopes of man? No, Emma, in pursuance of the advice of their physician, has accepted the invitation of a southern relative, and is passing the winter in a more genial clime; and Bessy is at length realizing some of the dreams of her ardent imagination in the gay home of Laura Wharton. It is the first time she has yielded to the pressing entreaties of her friends, who, instead of releasing her during her brothers' vacation, insist upon their meeting her under their own roof, to enjoy the festivities of the Christmas holidays.

Aunt Patty still occupies her usual corner; and Estelle is

faithful to her first-love, though the outline of her chubby face is softened, and has assumed a more intellectual character. Aunt Patty is still her oracle—the recipient of all her childish joys and sorrows.

But who is that dark-haired girl, seated at the table, plying her needle with such grace and dexterity, yet ever and anon lifting up from her work eyes of such flashing brightness, they almost startle the beholder? Do you remember Victorine, whose tangled locks, and gipsy-looking face, and dingy flowered robe, were the admiration of the mocking Frank? Her mother, the queen of slovens, is no more, quietly reposing in congenial dust. Monsieur Le Grand is returned to his native France, and Victorine, the orphan and the heiress, is under the guardianship of Mrs. Worth, whom she loves with a devotion that defies the power of language to express. Something of unusual interest seems to occupy the minds of all present. Victorine has dropped her work in her lap, and gazes on Edmund with an earnest, inquiring expression, while Homer's eyes are fixed on her, as if unconscious of the object on which they rest. Mrs. Worth looks down in deep revolving thought; and silence seems to have folded her wings by that glowing fireside.

"I will not go, mother," at length said Edmund, "if it pains you too much to give consent. Mr. Selwyn would not ask too great a sacrifice of you."

"I do not wish to consult my own feelings at all," replied Mrs. Worth, "but your advantage. The offer is so generous, so unexpected, it involves so many dependencies, I hardly know what to say—I tremble at the idea of seeing a loved one depart to a distant land." The moistened eye and quivering lips spoke eloquently of the past.

"I will not go, dear mother, if it makes you unhappy," repeated Edmund, seating himself by her side. "I would forego every advantage and crush every ambitious hope, rather than make you a prey to anxiety. Mr. Selwyn will be here to-night—decide for me to him."

"Will you resign the certainty of the first honours of the university?" asked Homer. "Who will wear your laurels, if you relinquish them?"

"I will bequeath them to you, brother," replied Edmund, smiling; "if you are not already burdened with the weight of your own."

"I will win my own laurels, or never wear them,' replied Homer coldly. "I am content to be second to Edmund in every thing, or rather I ought to be, since nature has willed it so."

"Neither nature, nor justice, nor affection has willed it," cried Edmund warmly. "You deserve a higher rank than myself, and nothing but modesty and self-distrust prevent you from being aware of it. I feel more proud of your reputation, than I do of my own, Homer."

"I believe you, on my soul I do," cried Homer, with one of those sudden bursts of feeling which sometimes illuminated his dark countenance; "but I am not the less wretched on that account."

"Believe me, once again, dear Homer," cried Edmund, earnestly grasping his hand, "when I tell you, that it is unjust, and ungrateful, and unwise, to let such feelings as you indulge destroy your own happiness and that of your friends. If I do accept Mr. Selwyn's offer, one of my strong motives is, to remove from your path one whose fancied excellence makes you degrade yourself in your own estimation." The youth spoke with energy, and his father's spirit looked forth from his eyes. Every good and noble feeling in Homer's breast was touched. He felt the moral superiority of Edmund, and writhed under the consciousness of that jealousy which withered his heart's best affections. How mean, selfish, and cold seemed his character in his own eyes! How base and criminal the master-passion, whose vassal he had become! It was this which had embittered his father's parting hour, clouded the bright prospects of his brother's youth, and saddened the home of his widowed mother. The remembrance of man's first brotherhood was ever before him—severed by sin, crimsoned by blood, branded by a curse, pursued by suffering, exile, and shame. A new feeling, scarcely acknowledged to himself, and partaking of the intensity, the bitterness, and the gloom of his character, was now taking possession of his opening manhood.

Mr. Selwyn was announced; Mrs. Worth turned pale at his entrance. The moment for decision was come, and her heart throbbed, incapable of calmness. He had been the warm friend of her husband, was a man high in public confidence, just returned from foreign lands, where he had

been officiating in some elevated national station, and was on the eve of departure for Europe, where he expected to remain for three years. He was very rich, a widower without children, and the friends of Edmund believed that the partiality he now manifested for him would eventuate in making him his heir. They warmly urged him to accept his generous offer.

"Trust him with me, madam," said he, when he again renewed his proposal, "and you never shall repent the confidence reposed; I will adopt him as my own son, and he shall have every advantage that wealth and opportunity can afford. Constantly engaged in public life, I have had but little leisure to feel the loneliness of a childless heart. Nor was it till I saw your son, that I knew of what strong unappeasable yearnings that heart is capable. Trust him with me, madam, and, as far as possible, I will make up to him what he has lost in his inestimable father."

Mrs. Worth wept as much from gratitude as memory. She looked at Edmund, and read his wishes in his kindling eyes. Could she be so selfish as to suffer her maternal tenderness to interfere with the brilliant prospects of her son? Ought she not rather to be proud of such a compliment to his talents, graces, and virtues? The God who had deprived him of the best of fathers, had raised him up a powerful friend in this great and good man. Then Homer, too, her strange, wayward first-born,—perhaps the flame of fraternal jealousy would die away in his bosom, unfed by the presence of its object. She thought of the Hebrew mother, who committed her boy to the waves, in the confidence of the God of Israel, and how this same feeble child became the lawgiver of the Jewish nation and the chosen friend of the great I AM. Perhaps a glorious destiny awaited *her* son. She hesitated no longer. But that night, long after every eye was closed in sleep, she sat by her lonely hearth and dwelt on the sacrifice she was about to make. To live three years uncheered by the sunshine of his smile! How long in prospective seemed those weary years! and yet three long years were passed, since, in the agony of a crushed and broken heart, she prayed for strength to live for her children. Prostrate on her knees, she renewed that prayer of faith. "O my Father," cried she, "thou hast permitted me to live for them, but let me not

ask that they may live for me. Let me commit them, into thy hands. Do with them whatsoever seemeth good in thy sight."

When she rose from her knees, she found herself directly opposite the portrait of her husband, and the features, softened by the pale lamp-light, seemed to smile sadly down upon her. That picture, since his death, had been removed to the sacred retirement of her own chamber. There it met her first waking, her last closing glance. There its deep, still eyes ever followed hers, triumphing in their pictured rays, over the mists and shadows of the tomb. It was a perfect likeness; the canvas lived, breathed, spoke—death was cheated of his prey.

Every thought was now merged in the absorbing one of Edmund's departure. Aunt Patty, whose ruling passion had lost none of its strength, expected samples of all the royal robes on the other side of the Atlantic. Yet after having made the request, she recollected that it must be a bad sign, as she had given a bag to Mr. Worth and it came only as a sad memento of his death; she told Edmund he might bring them of his own accord, but she would not ask for them. Neither would she allow Estelle or Victorine to give him any parting gifts of affection, as they were henceforth *bad signs*, in her opinion. But Victorine plied her unwearied fingers to assist Mrs. Worth, and seemed to supply both Emma's and Bessy's place. Edmund was to pass through Boston and meet Bessy there, but Emma was too remote in her southern home, to know of the change in her brother's destiny. She was gathering health, and strength, in the land of the "dew-dropping south," and her mother would not hasten her return.

"You would do any thing in the world for Edmund," said Homer to Victorine, as he sat watching her, while she marked his initials on a packet of linen. "You do not mean that he should forget you."

"I hope not, indeed," replied she quickly, "for I am sure I never shall forget him. What shall we do without him? He is the life and joy of the whole house. I believe I shall sit down and take snuff with Aunt Patty, and look over all the scraps she has gathered since the world began. I shall have no one to talk with when he is gone, for I cannot think of intruding my folly on your dear, sad mother."

"I suppose you will not condescend to talk with me," said Homer, drawing his chair back as he spoke. "I know I have nothing light or amusing to say, but I should think a sensible person might like sometimes grave things."

"Oh! I should like to talk to you of all things," cried Victorine, laughing; "but you have such a terrific countenance, and look so grand and lofty, you frighten every idea out of my head. Now, Homer, don't be angry, but you are exactly like Lara, whose description Edmund read last evening. Don't you recollect it?

> "'He stood, a stranger in this breathing world,
> An erring spirit from another world,—
> A thing of dark imaginings,' &c.

Such beings do splendidly in poetry, but they won't pass in every-day life."

Victorine had all the French vivacity of manner and grace of motion, which was conspicuous in her in childhood, when slovenliness obscured her personal beauty. She was the only one in the household who dared to jest with Homer. Every one else stood in awe of the young misanthropist; even his mother, fearing to wound his too sensitive nature, never ventured to treat with levity his gloomy paroxysms. Victorine, alone, like the harmless lightning playing over the thunder-cloud, gilding its dark edges with the flame of youthful wit and merriment.

"The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots," said Homer, a transient smile most beautifully illuminating his countenance; "neither can I smile like Edmund."

"Oh! if you knew how a smile became you," interrupted she, "you would not make them so rare. It is like noon breaking on midnight,—there, don't frown again, for I didn't say that to please you, but for the sake of a metaphor. I don't care, Homer, whether you smile or frown: I'll laugh when you're angry, and smile when you smile; but, were you in real sorrow, I would pity you, and weep with you to your heart's content."

"I'll tell you, Victorine, why I so seldom smile," replied he: "it is because no one loves me. From my first remembrance of feeling, I had a consciousness of something about me cold and repelling. I felt that I could not inspire

sympathy or love, and I was too proud to seek, as a favour, what was denied me as a right."

"I thought you cared not to be loved," said Victorine, more seriously than she had hitherto spoken. "I thought you disdained the very idea of being loved, even by your own sisters."

"I!" repeated he, vehemently. "I would walk over burning ploughshares, endure the tortures of the rack and wheel; I would bear all the agonies that man can inflict or feel, for even the hope to be loved as Edmund is. *I care not to be loved!* The dread, the fear, the certainty of never having been, of never being loved, is the secret of my misanthropy and despair. I would willingly die to-morrow, to be drawn, even this day, as near to the heart of one human being as Edmund is."

"Strange!" said Victorine to herself, as Homer, ashamed of the vehemence of his emotion, abruptly left the room. "Strange! that his heart should seem to be filled with hatred, when it is only yearning after love. I thought he was wrapped scornfully up in himself, and disdained all mankind. Well! I am sure we will all love him, if he will let us."

Victorine, domesticated as a child with the two brothers, looked upon them both with feelings similar to a sister, and addressed them with the freedom of one of an exceedingly ardent temperament; she suffered her affections to flow out bounteously on every object which excited their interest. She had once loved her cats and dogs to idolatry: but now her more refined taste and cultivated understanding revolted from the thought of bestowing upon them the caresses due only to human beings. She had loved her mother, and mourned her loss; but Mrs. Worth seemed to her an angel of light, moving in a purer and holier atmosphere, and to diffuse on every object around her a spirit of purity and holiness. Much was said, when this wild, neglected, but singularly accomplished child was received into her family; and some even dared to attribute the kindness to mercenary motives, knowing the reputed wealth of the girl. "She can never get the tangles from her hair," said one. Victorine's hair was now remarkable for its glossy waves. "Her skin will never become fair," said another. Victorine's complexion was now that of a pure,

clear, delicate brunette. "She will never learn to dress like a lady," cried a third. Victorine was now proverbial for her maidenly neatness and taste in dress. People said Mrs. Worth had wrought a miracle, but it was only a miracle of love. Perhaps Victorine herself was destined to work one as astonishing and as unhoped for.

It was a sad hour for Edmund, when he bade adieu to his mother; but as one parting has been described, this shall be omitted in the family sketch. Aunt Patty would not suffer an eye to follow him as he passed over the threshold: but when she recollected that it was Friday, bad Friday, that ill-omened day, her superstitious fears became so dark, they infected the whole household. It was the day Mr. Selwyn had appointed; his business would not admit of delay, and he was not a man to whom one would avow such apprehensions.

The travellers stopped at Mrs. Wharton's, that Edmund might bid farewell to his sister Bessy. It was their resting-place for the night, and we cannot resist the temptation of introducing another family picture. The years which had added dignity and height to Homer and Edmund, had not gone by without many a fair gift to the inmates of this household, not excluding their young guest, the blue-eyed Bessy. Frank was a tall, handsome, gay, rather dashing collegian, full of fun and frolic, and reckless good-nature; and Laura a fair, fashionable-looking maiden, dressed rather beyond her years, but with exquisite taste, and perfectly *au fait* in all the courtesies and graces of society. But Bessy was the most beautiful, blooming, poetic-looking creature, that ever adorned the prose realities of life:—beautiful as the dreams of her own bright fancy, and surely nothing could go beyond it. Have you ever seen a picture with a kind of soft shadow floating over it,—a mist, as it were, reposing on its depth of light and shade?—so it was with Bessy's face. It was brilliant from the clearness and transparency of its colouring; pensive, from the softness and exquisite delicacy of lineament and expression. And her hair still curled, and rippled, and sported round her brow and about her neck in the unshorn, unfettered freedom of her infantine beauty. Bessy knew that she was beautiful, for flattering tongues, fond, gazing eyes, and faithful mirrors had too often repeated this truth. But the

consciousness of beauty did not, as is frequently the case, inspire gayety in her. She had an image of ideal beauty in her soul, so much brighter and purer, that she yearned after its realization with unutterable longings. She had witnessed the scenes which Laura described so glowingly, and they all seemed cold and artificial, devoid of intellectual life. The conversation which she heard sounded so vapid, false, and senseless, she could not be interested in it. She was afraid to express herself with that fervour and beauty of language peculiar to her, lest she should be thought extravagant and affected; so, with a treasury of rich, burning, glorious thoughts within, she generally sat silent and abstracted, pensive, and sometimes even sad. Her silence was imputed to youth and timidity. No one imagined what a peopled world of her own she was inhabiting. No one dreamed of the depth of feeling, the fire of imagination, and the power of intellect imbodied in that cherubic form.

"How beautiful is your sister Bessy!" exclaimed Mr. Selwyn. "I have not seen her since she was a little child. I wish it were possible to take her with us: she should have superior advantages. I have seen much of the world, and the beauties of different climes, but never have beheld so lovely a countenance. If she were my daughter, I would be proud to present her at all the courts of Europe."

The unconscious Bessy at this moment approached, and put her arm lovingly in her brother's.

"What do you think Mr. Selwyn is saying of you?" said Edmund. "He wishes you could go to Europe with us. How would you like to travel on classic ground, to see the

> 'Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece,
> Where burning Sappho loved and sung?'"

The colour on Bessy's cheeks deepened to crimson.

"Oh! brother, can I go? Is Mr. Selwyn serious? To Europe! to Italy, to the land of love and song!—Ah! I see you are sporting with my enthusiasm, by the smile on Mr. Selwyn's lips."

"If I had a female friend of sufficient age and standing, to be your protectress, and whom I could ask to accompany us, you should go," replied Mr. Selwyn. "But Edmund shall take you across the Atlantic yet, if your classic enthusiasm does not grow cool as your heart expands"

"I thought the heart had an expansive power," answered Bessy, smiling.

"The enthusiasm of the head and the warmth of the heart are different, as you will one day experience; but not, I trust, before we return; for if the heart should twine itself round some new support, it would cling so tightly, the wings of enthusiasm would flutter in vain to bear you away."

"There is no danger of my heart clinging more closely around any one than Edmund," replied Bessy; "and one of these days he is to build me a small Grecian temple, and adorn it with statuary and paintings, and shade it 'with bonny-spreading bushes,' and then we are to live together the happiest brother and sister in the world. Homer and Emma are to dwell in some baronial castle, lonely, grand, and inaccessible; where the walls are mouldy with the damps of ages, and the midnight shadows are peopled with apparitions."

"A few years hence," said Mr. Selwyn, "your castles in the air will be made of very different materials." And as he looked upon those two charming beings, thus linked together by the ties of affection, the strongest, the fondest they yet had known, he sighed to think what bitter lessons life might have in store for them, when they learned the strength of that love which is the over-mastering passion of the human heart.

"What are you talking about? Grecian temples and baronial castles!" said Frank, who, with Laura, now joined the trio. "I have no idea of these exclusives; and whether you live in temple, castle, cottage, or cabin, I shall be certain to squeeze in as priest, warder, gardener, or wood-cutter."

"Oh! you would spoil all Bessy's poetry and sentiment," said Edmund, laughing. "You are too much of the earth, earthy; you could not live on nectar and ambrosia; and Bessy will have no grosser viands at her table."

"Now Bessy and I are the very persons to live together," said Frank; "as I am earthy, I should bring her down from the skies occasionally, to hold communion with me; and she, being of heaven, heavenly, would draw me after her: so the two forces, constantly acting, would produce at last the right equilibrium."

"I thought Victorine was your heroine," cried Laura; "you admired her so much in her beautiful flowered dress and *fancy* hair, as you called it—they say she is quite bewitching now."

"I will leave Victorine for Homer. He is *grand, gloomy*, and *peculiar;* and she bright, sparkling and gay. There should always be a contrast, to produce that delightful equilibrium I was speaking of just now."

"Who will contrast with me, brother?" asked Laura. "You have entirely slighted me."

"There is no one left for you but Edmund, and he is entirely too perfect to contrast with any one, unless it is the witch of Endor herself. I don't know you yet, Laura, but I believe you have more character than we dream of; you are trying hard to be a fine lady, but you are meant for something better or worse, after all; upon the whole, you and Edmund would do admirably together: as for Homer, he is the hero of the drama, the Corsair, the Paul Clifford, the Charles de Moor, for whom half a dozen maidens may yet die."

"And what will you do for poor Emma?" said Bessy, amused at Frank's arrangements for the future. "There is no one good enough for Emma."

"Emma!" repeated Frank, "Oh! I forgot Emma—though she is so young, she is so thoughtful and pious, she always seemed to me like old folks. I'll give her to Mr. Selwyn, for I remember her saying one day, he was the handsomest man she ever saw, except her father."

Mr. Selwyn blushed at the compliment, but looked kindly on the bold, gay youth, who dared to utter it. He said he intended to have a patriarchal establishment, and when they were all married, they should come and live with him, and he hoped to see their children's children even unto the third and fourth generation. He pondered Frank's sayings in his heart. "Let us see a few years hence," thought he, "whether he has spoken in the spirit of prophecy. These girls and boys will then be men and women, and these words of jest may be remembered as the shadowing forth of their future destiny."

CHAPTER VII.

SHALL we look over Bessy's shoulder, while she reads a letter from Emma, dated about the time when Edmund, unknown to her, began his transatlantic tour? We would like to see her impressions of a southern life, as contrasted with her northern home.

"DEAR BESSY:—I can scarcely realize that I am addressing you, in the very depth of winter, for gales soft as summer are fanning my cheek. To be sure, there is a bright fire glowing in the chimney, but the doors and windows are all open; and Mrs. Woodville, or Aunt Woodville, is sewing in the piazza; I can imagine you all gathered round the blazing hearth, shivering if the door is accidentally left ajar, with your listed windows and doors, your banks of tan round the walls of the house, your deep white paths through the drifted snow, and all the chill paraphernalia of winter. We have the music of sweet singing birds, you the jingling of the merry-going bells. There are beautiful roses blooming in the garden, such as we cherish at home as rare exotics, protecting them from every breath of winter. Oh! Bessy, you need not wonder that I feel like a new being, when such frail, delicate things as flowers bloom fearless and unharmed by frost or cold. My breath no longer labours in my bosom; it comes and goes without my knowing it, and my heart no longer throbs wearily against my aching side; Aunt Woodville is very kind to me; she sends me out every morning to ride before breakfast, on a little pony, accompanied by Uncle Jack, as my gallant. You must know I have as many uncles and aunts as there are negroes on the plantation, and I have already become so much attached to them, I am very willing to give them that endearing title. They will do any thing in the world for Miss Emma, 'bless her little heart,' they say. You know the prejudices I had against negroes, before I came, but I find them so kind and pleasant, I fear I shall like them better than our own white servants. Aunt Charity is just coming up the steps, with a bucket of cold

water, balanced on her head, her right hand touching the edge of the pail, her left resting on her hip. You cannot think what a picturesque and graceful attitude this is, and could you see half a dozen of them walking from the spring, bearing in this manner their brimming buckets, you would be convinced that labour did not necessarily bow the figure and deprive it of all grace of motion. I used to think rich southern planters had nothing to do, with so many slaves to wait upon them, but I am sure my dear mother would think it a weary task if she had to carry about a big bunch of keys, like Aunt Woodville, and keep so many people at work about her. Her house is as neat as wax, and I could not use a better comparison, for her summer parlour and bedroom have waxed floors, which shine so that you may see your face in them, and they are so smooth that there is great danger of your sliding down. In the large hall, there is a little shelf where a bucket of cool water always stands, an object of perfect admiration to me. The wood is as white as snow, and it is hooped with burnished brass, and there is a dipper in it, made of the cocoa-nut shell, rimmed with silver. This is a trifling thing to mention, but it seems to me more characteristic of the south than any thing else. I will relate one anecdote for Estelle's amusement. We have a little black girl here of the name of Sukey, who waits particularly on me. The other day I asked her how long it would be before supper was ready, as I wanted to take a walk. 'Oh!' said she, 'it will be a good little heap of a piece of a while.' But this is not my anecdote: one evening soon after my arrival, as I was sadly wandering about in the yard, I heard Aunt Charity calling in the most mournful accents on the name of Sukey—again and again she repeated the sound. 'Is Sukey lost,' said I, beginning to be anxious for my little waiting-maid. 'No! I hope not,' said she, 'I always calls 'um home, at night.' 'Does she go away so far every night?' said I; 'I should think she was too small; I wonder Aunt Woodville lets her.' Here Aunt Charity showed her white teeth from ear to ear. 'Oh! Miss Emma, you are so funny—some of 'um little, some of 'um big; misses don't worry herself about 'um.' I did not quite understand Aunt Charity, but hearing her continue to invoke Sukey so mournfully, I offered to go with her in search of the lost child. Aunt Charity

stared at me a moment, then held tight by the fence and laughed and shook, as only a negro can laugh and shake. 'It's the cows, Miss Emma—the cows—we all calls 'em Sukey.' Uncle Woodville was so much amused at my mistake, that he has called me Sukey ever since.

"Dearest Bessy,—The sweet briar enclosed in this letter was plucked from my father's grave. I have enclosed a sprig to my mother, as the most sacred—the most precious of all earthly mementoes. Every evening, when it does not rain, I walk to this hallowed spot, and I feel as if your spirits were all hovering near me, to hold communion with the sainted dead. When I first saw that grave, I thought my heart would break. I threw myself on the cold clay, and clung to it, as if it were the sacred body of our father, given back to my arms. I called upon his name, but the sighing of the long grass alone sounded in my ears; the chill of the damp earth penetrated to my very soul, and I remembered the warm breast where I had once pillowed my head, and the contrast was agony. When I arose and looked up, the setting sun shed such a mild light on the shadows of that mournful place, I felt that the world was not all darkness; I recollected that beautiful passage of scripture: 'And the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams.' I no longer thought of my father as mouldering beneath the clods of the valley, but as an angel in heaven, more glorious than the sun, yet ever becoming more and more glorious. Many a time, dear Bessy, when I went to kneel by that grave of our father, I thought I should soon sleep coldly and quietly by his dear side; and all unconscious as he there lies, it seemed to me, that it would be a comfort to him, to have his 'young moralist' reposing so near him. Oh! how many dark and sweet thoughts were blended in my mind. I wanted, if I died, to be buried in the same coffin, to be wrapped in the same winding-sheet; and then, when the last trumpet should sound, the arms of my father would enfold me, and bear me tenderly to the mercy-seat of my Saviour and my God. Do not let mother see this part of my letter, for I fear it would make her sad; I would only bring to her the sweetest and holiest memories; I would tell her how lovely the pale rose of winter blooms on the soil that covers his ashes; how, like a celestial ministrant, the moon comes down, and covers it with a silver pall, and

makes the place of graves beautiful as the gate of heaven. I would tell her, how every one here worships his memory; how the tongue of the African, as well as the white man, grows eloquent in his praise. How I wish they could see Edmund, or you, Bessy; I am such a poor, frail creature, the only feeling I can excite is compassion, yet I am daily stronger and better; they tell me I am getting rosy; you know with what reluctance I left home, and what a poor return I made for Uncle Woodville's kindness, who came so much out of his way, to induce me to accompany him back from the north. He had heard our dear father speak so tenderly of his invalid daughter, and of his wish that she should breathe the soft gales of the south; the good man sought me out and would not be denied. Surely a kind Providence directed his steps; for the sickly plant has indeed revived, and rejoices in the sunshine and the dew. I am writing you a long letter, but so many things crowd for expression, I cannot lay down my pen. I had a long letter from Homer last week. I cannot tell you how it affected me, it was very kind, but very melancholy; he says, we must live together, for I understand him better than any one else, and am not so selfishly happy as the rest of the world. Poor Homer! if he only knew how well we all loved him, he would not make us so sad as he does. Tell Aunt Patty, that Aunt Woodville has collected a great many pieces of calico for her scrap-bag, and has told me so many pleasant incidents connected with them, I fear I cannot remember them all; tell her, everybody here knows Aunt Patty and loves her too, for a certain somebody has talked a great deal about her; and I have no doubt, she has felt her left ear burn very often—a sign, you know, that some one is praising her very hard. Dear little Estelle! tell her she must water my geraniums, and move them where the sun shines warmest in the day, and the fire has diffused its heat at night. Oh! the sweet flowers of the south! yet I would give them all, even in their spring glory, for a glimpse of the snows that surround my northern home. One little circumstance, my beloved sister, I must not omit, though, if it affects you as it did me, this paper will be blotted with your tears. I was rambling in the woods that skirt the cultivated grounds, and stopped under a large beech, that hung over a narrow stream, or branch as it is

here called. There was a gray trunk fallen just at the foot of this noble tree; I sat down and listened to the gurgling waters, when I caught a glimpse of letters engraved on the bark of the beech tree. First on the silver rind was the name of our beloved mother, then her children, from the first-born Homer, to little Estelle. Ah! whose hand had carved these characters? who had sat, like me, on that gray fallen trunk, and thought of the dear ones left behind? Where is the traveller now? Where I perchance may soon be, and one of those loved ones, it may be my own Bessy, may wander to this spot, and sit under this spreading beech, and weep for me, as I have wept for him. I have touched a sad chord, but I did not intend it. This is such a place for memory, it is difficult to be cheerful and thoughtful at the same time; yet you must not think of me as otherwise than happy. If I were not so, I should be the most ungrateful being in the world. Forgive my egotism; I have written so much of myself, I am ashamed to look back. But of whom do you wish to hear, in this land of strangers, more than your own affectionate EMMA."

We love family letters, and would gladly transcribe the correspondence of the brothers and sisters, during their separation from each other. But we fear others may not have congenial tastes, and would find them too unvarying and quiet, to satisfy that love of excitement which is fed by stirring incidents and unfolding passions. Edmund wrote volumes in his long epistles; but the ground he travelled was classic, and every particle of dust on which he trod has been made sacred by the children of genius and of song. His pages would present nothing new to the reader, though they were read with rapture and enthusiasm by those to whom they were addressed. Bessy was his particular correspondent; and she now poured forth her soul in harmonious numbers, for she had discovered she had the gift of song. Her spirit, like the Æolian harp, responded in music to every breath that swept over it, and thrilled with transport at its wild melody.

"Charming child!" Mr. Selwyn would exclaim, when he perused these beautiful effusions of youthful genius; "she shall yet visit classic ground. She will be a Corinna, without her imperfections."

The time of Edmund's absence was shortened by one

year, in consequence of some new arrangements of Mr. Selwyn, and it is astonishing how quickly two years glided by, bringing back the young traveller to his native soil. It was rather more than two years, however; for when he left home it was in the depth of winter, and now it was in the full bloom of summer. As they approached the house in the hush of a moonlight evening, Edmund's feelings became so intense, he would not bear that even Mr. Selwyn should witness the meeting. He was no longer a boy, yet he knew that he should give way to boyish emotion, and, leaping from the carriage, he jumped over the garden railing, and opened a side gate, which brought him unobserved to the end of the piazza, where two couple sat in the moonlight, at some distance from each other. Edmund stood still a moment, and contemplated these figures, with a throbbing heart. The two nearest him were immediately recognised —the dark brow of Homer was bent towards the upturned face of Victorine, whose brilliant eyes could never be mistaken for another's. She leaned back against a pillar, and the vine that encircled it drooped its dewy leaves on her sable hair. There was something exquisitely graceful in the abandonment of her attitude, and the contour of her head, defined on the green curtain-work behind. He was talking in a deep under-tone, and she was listening; but her eyes wandered over the firmament, as if troubled by the burning gaze of his.

"He loves her," thought Edmund; "two years have not passed away in vain for him. God bless thee, my brother, and not only fill thy heart with love for her, but for me, and all mankind."

His eyes turned to the other pair, who sat side by side, at the other end of the piazza, equally absorbed by each other. That young female form could belong to no other than his sister Bessy. Such angel hair never adorned any other head but hers. And who was the young man that sat so near her, that the night gale, as it fanned them, blew her ringlets against his cheek, that evidently inclined to meet their soft caress?

Edmund felt a sudden pang, at sight of this stranger admitted to such near communion with his beautiful sister. He had been exiled from his maternal home, a wanderer to various climes, but he had brought back unchanged affec-

tions, a heart in which fraternal love was still the ruling principle. He returned to find himself supplanted, as it were, in the bosom of others. Homer and Victorine, Bessy and the stranger, thus sat in the silence of that moonlight eve, as if the world contained no beings but themselves, and as if the moon revealed the secret of her glory alone for them.

"Where is my mother and Emma?" thought Edmund, catching the glimpse of a lamp, through the white curtains of his mother's window; "dear old Aunt Patty, and darling Estelle?" He turned softly, and passing through a grove of lilac trees, entered a side door, which was left open, and stood at the entrance of his mother's room. She sat at table reading. Letters were scattered around her which seemed to be his own, which she had been re-perusing. Time, as if charmed with her sweet, matronly graces, had touched her so gently, that he had not left the slightest impress of his defacing fingers. It was very thoughtless—very imprudent—but Edmund could not resist the temptation of stealing noiselessly behind her chair, and clasping her in his arms before she was aware of his presence. The cry of joyful amazement that resounded through the house, brought all its inmates, but poor Aunt Patty, gathered together in Mrs. Worth's apartment. Even the stranger hurried to the door, but drew respectfully back, as if conscious the scene should be sacred from intrusion. Emma and Estelle came flying down stairs in their loose white robes, which Edmund afterwards declared were the most becoming dresses they had ever worn.

"Oh! Edmund, how tall you are grown!" "How sunburned you are!" "How well you look!" "When did you come?" "And how did you get in?" Such ejaculations were showered into his ears, while his hands were grasped by half a dozen pair of loving hands, and as many pair of arms tried to encircle his neck.

"Who would not cross the Atlantic for such a welcome home?" cried he, in the midst of that soft prison of snowy arms. "Emma, the south winds have blown kindly on you, they have given colour and health to your cheek. And Bessy"—he remembered the stranger in the piazza, and looked earnestly upon her. She blushed, and leaned her face on his shoulder. "Do you love no one better than Edmund yet?"

"Oh! no one in the world," replied she hastily; "ungrateful brother, to ask such a question, when my heart is aching from the very fulness of its joy and love!"

"Don't you want to see Aunt Patty, Edmund? Poor Aunt Patty!" asked Estelle, sadly.

"Aunt Patty!" repeated Edmund, starting. "She is not dead?"

"No:" cried Estelle; "but, she can't walk any more, and has to stay in her own room all the time, and sit in a big arm-chair. Come and see her, Edmund; she told me to bring you up."

Estelle led her brother up the winding stairs, to the chamber of Aunt Patty, while Emma and Bessy followed close behind. There sat Aunt Patty in the big arm-chair, a little table close beside her, on which lay her snuff-box, and spectacles, and a pile of books. Her head was drawn on one side, and her whole appearance spoke increased infirmity. Edmund was so much grieved at this unexpected change, that he held her hand in silence, while she shook his as if she would never release her grasp, smiling and ejaculating,—"How handsome you have grown! How like a man you look! As good as ever, I know! Did you bring some pretty pieces for poor old Aunt Patty? Estelle is making them into a fine bed-quilt for me, so there will be no danger of their getting lost. I can't walk about any more, but I've so many feet to run for me, I hardly miss my own."

Edmund assured her that he had brought beautiful specimens of English and French silk and calico, and that he could tell her a great many anecdotes of ladies who wore similar dresses. In the morning he would unpack his trunk and display his collection of European curiosities. Estelle longed not more impatiently for the morning's dawn, than Aunt Patty, whose strange ruling passion seemed to gather strength as her physical powers declined.

Mr. Selwyn's arrival was hailed with a joy which, though less vehement, was as heartfelt as that which greeted the return of Edmund. They greeted him as a benefactor, friend,—almost as a father. Though he was certainly not a vain man, he could not help looking kindly at Emma, remembering Frank's parting jests. Emma, whose affection for her father bordered on adoration, felt as if she could almost worship the man who was his early friend and as-

sociate. His character, too, was such as her serious and reflecting mind knew how to appreciate. Its philanthropy, its magnanimity, disinterestedness, justice, loftiness, and piety, constituted her idea of a Christian gentleman. Bessy compared him to the oak, under whose shade the wayfaring man and the child find refreshment and rest; but Emma thought the beautiful similitude of scripture, "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land," more striking. She loved the book of God, and as naturally sought its divine metaphors as the panting hart the cooling stream.

The stranger of the piazza was introduced by the name of Vivian. In spite of his efforts to prevent it, Edmund could not help bowing coldly to one who seemed to have come so near the heart of Bessy. Who was he? Whence came he? By what right was he domesticated in the family circle? Estelle, who dearly loved to tell news and create surprises, answered all these questions without his asking one. "I have got something to show you," whispered she, mysteriously. "Come with me without letting Bessy see you, for that would spoil it all." Gliding before him with a lamp carefully shaded by her hand, she conducted him to a little back-parlour, which his father had occupied as a study. The books still remained as he had last arranged them, but every thing else was changed. The windows were darkened by green curtains, drawn closely, except one, through which the moon looked, as a celestial amateur, on one of the purest productions of human art. In the centre of the room stood an easel, sustaining a canvas, on which glowed the lineaments of an angel, a muse, or a grace,—just as the imagination of the gazer pleased to decide. The soft, blue eyes were turned upwards with a kind of wistful, languishing expression, as if they yearned after the heavenly and unseen, finding nothing amidst the earthly and the seen to satisfy the cravings of the heart. The hair fell back, like a golden halo, around the calm, beauteous brow, melting away in the shadows of the back-ground; the hands were clasped, as in the attitude of prayer, and gently raised above a circle of transparent, rose-tinted clouds, that rolled over the fore-ground, threatening to veil the fair head with their gauze-like folds. Edmund stood gazing so long at this picture, that Estelle's hand

ached from holding the lamp, and she quietly deposited it on the floor. Though Edmund had not spoken one word, she knew that intense admiration closed his lips; and there was something too sublime to her in his silence, for her to dare to break it. As the lamp-light receded, the moon's rays fell gloriously upon it, and the shadow of the lattice was reflected on the face. "How beautiful!" at length exclaimed Edmund. "How lovely! What a perfect likeness,—yet what an angel countenance! Who is the artist? He should be immortal!"

"It's Mr. Vivian," said Estelle; "the gentleman you saw here just now. He was travelling, and saw Bessy at church, and wanted to make her picture to carry off to Italy. He's painted one for himself, and this is for mother. He's waiting to paint you too, for he heard mother say she would give all the world for your likeness, when you were gone. And we all want him to paint mother, and I want him to take Aunt Patty."

Estelle paused to take breath, and to watch the effect of her wonderful communications. Edmund still kept his fascinated gaze on the illuminated canvas, thrilling under the magic spell of genius.

"Who and what is this young man?" cried he again.

"It's Mr. Vivian, I told you, brother," repeated Estelle, a little impatiently; "he's going to paint me in Aunt Patty's lap, holding her snuff-box; and she's to be sorting out pieces of calico. That big canvas there is for us."

"And what does he ask for all his pictures?" inquired Edmund.

"I don't know," replied the little girl, thoughtfully, "but I heard him tell Bessy once she would pay him for all. That is not fair, is it, brother?"

"And what did Bessy say?"

"I didn't hear what she said, but she turned away her head as if she didn't like it; I know I wouldn't."

Edmund felt a soft arm twining round his, and looking down he saw the sweet original of the picture at his side.

"Is it like me, brother?"

"Yes: but it makes my heart ache to look at that picture."

"You don't like it, then."

"I could gaze on it for ever,—but—Estelle, my darling,

take back the lamp to the parlour, and we will follow you directly. The moon gives light enough for us."

Estelle took up the lamp, and walked slowly out of the room, feeling somewhat slighted after the pains she had taken to exhibit the portrait. Edmund drew his sister to the window, and once again repeated the earnest question, "Who is this young man?"

"He is an artist!"

"I know it,—and a glorious one! What else?"

"He is a poet! He writes divinely, as he paints."

"And what else, my sister? Forgive this inquisition."

"He is a devoted son and affectionate brother," answered Bessy, in a firmer tone. "He supports a widowed mother and orphan sister by the works of his genius."

"If so, I honour him. And yet he is willing to linger here for weeks, asking no other recompense than my sister's heart."

"Edmund!"

There were tears in Bessy's voice, as some beautiful writer has expressed it, and Edmund's heart smote him with a sense of unkindness.

"I have been gone a long time, Bessy, and during my absence I have yearned after my sisters with undivided tenderness. I return and find a stranger occupying the place I left, and supplanting me in the bosom of one, perhaps the best beloved,—I may be a little jealous and selfish,—but I am jealous for you also, and would not willingly yield my place to one who is not supremely worthy."

"Your place, Edmund, will never be yielded to another. But the heart must be very narrow, indeed, that has not room for any but brothers and sisters. It seems to me, the more one loves, the more one is capable of loving. I know but little by experience, but I believe the ocean's waters can hardly be compared in breadth and depth to the love of the human heart."

"One question more, dear Bessy——"

"No, no, Edmund; no more questions to-night. But one thing, I pray you, do not think less of Vivian, because he happened to imagine Bessy's foolish face would look well on canvas, and wished to retain it as a specimen of his art; or that he is willing to gratify a fond mother's feelings, by leaving her an image which may remind her of me when I have passed away, like a dream, as though I had

never been. Come, they will be angry at my keeping you here so long."

The brother and sister went out hand in hand, and Edmund felt, dearly as he had loved Bessy before, the interest he now felt for her was far deeper than ever. Vivian, the artist, the poet, the lover, became henceforth an attractive study; and the more he studied, the less he wondered at the influence he had acquired over the ardent and imaginative Bessy. When they returned to the family circle, Mr. Selwyn came forward with Vivian, and again introduced him to Edmund as a young friend of his, whom he recognised as having met in Italy, and of whose reputation, as an American, he was very proud. The tone of confidence and approbation in which Mr. Selwyn spoke, was a volume of recommendation to Edmund, and his cold bow was exchanged for a cordial pressure of the hand, and a glance of unrepressed admiration. The evening passed away, to use Bessy's favourite expression, *like a fairy dream*. There was something in Edmund's manners that had the power of enchantment; and his eyes, like the sun, gladdened all that they shone upon. Even Homer's cavern-like soul obeyed, this night, the magical *open-sesame* of his smile, and suffered some of its hidden diamonds and gems to glitter on the beholder. Music added its charm to the sweet socialities of the hour. Victorine's piano, Edmund's flute, and Vivian's violin made a most harmonious concert; and the soft, clear voices of the sisters chimed in, like an angel chorus. Victorine played, as she did every thing else, with all her heart and soul: her fingers flew over the keys with a rapid, lightning touch, wild and thrilling, or lingered, with a passionate depth of tone, that made the heart ache and sigh, from a consciousness of its own capabilities of love and sorrow. She was usually pale; but, when she played or sang, her cheeks crimsoned, and her lips glowed, as if a fire were kindled, and flaming within. Homer stood behind her chair, gazing upon her image reflected in the mirror. The harp of the shepherd minstrel had no more power over the evil spirit that possessed the first king of Israel, than the music of Victorine on Homer. If life were made of music, and Victorine was the minstrel, Homer would have been the most amiable of human beings. Edmund, whose light breath warbled through the flute,

making most ravishing strains, contemplated the other musicians with unconscious interest; Homer and Victorine must now be inseparably connected in his thoughts; she must be to him nothing more than a sister, as she had been in his more boyish years. He caught himself indulging in a transient feeling of envy, that Homer had inspired love in this fascinating and impassioned being,—leaving nothing but cold, calm friendship for him. Then he rejoiced that the fraternal jealousy which had so much embittered their life, would probably yield to the passion whose vassal he now was. He remembered the airy castles Bessy had built on the evening of his departure,—the Grecian temple, the statutes and pictures,—where were they now? All vanished, and an altar fed with burning incense risen in its place. And Homer's baronial castle, where Emma was to preside, with its raised drawbridge and deep moat?—it was now transformed to a moon-light bower, where the aroma of flowers and the breath of music mingled together, and intoxicated the soul with love. He recollected Frank's prediction with regard to himself: that could never be,—Laura was too artificial and vain; she could no more fill the capacities his heart had for loving, than a shallow rill could fill the ocean's bed:—he never should meet one who could. He would never marry, but give his talents to the world, his affections to his mother and Emma, who would never marry, likewise, but be the sweetest and best old maid that ever lived; and the young Estelle should be the darling of both.

While Edmund thus builds up new castles on the ruins of the old, let us exercise our fairy privilege of reading the thoughts of others, and see what Mr. Selwyn is thinking of, while he keeps time with his foot, to the changing music. He, too, remembered Bessy's and Frank's gay prophecies, and thought how seldom the dreams of youth were realized. "This young artist," mused he, "is poor, but his genius will one day enrich him. If he loves Bessy, and is worthy of her, the want of wealth shall be no drawback to his success: I will help him on, but not make him too rich, lest the world lose the wonders of his art, and he the blessings of industry. The proud, reserved Homer! how he hangs over that dark-eyed French girl, as if he would exclude her from the gaze of all. There is a web of misery

weaving between them. I hope she may not love him too well, for he is incapable of domestic happiness. Good heavens! what a glance he just cast on Edmund, because he chanced to be looking at Victorine. I foresee trouble on every side, though every thing looks so bright and fair now I must take Edmund away with me again: he is destined for a lofty sphere; my wealth, my influence, my best affections are his; he shall perpetuate his father's name, not only untarnished, but brightened in fame. Noble, excellent boy! I wish I had a daughter to bestow upon him, that he might indeed be my own son."

When the family separated for the night, Edmund lingered behind, that he might be a few moments alone with his brother. He longed for unreserved confidence, for an assurance that mutual trust and affection should henceforth exist between them. "Let me wish thee joy, brother," said he, pressing both hands in his; "you have won the first collegiate honours; you have adopted the profession of our honoured father; you love, and where you love are loved again. Homer, you must be happy now."

"No, I never shall be happy; I deserve not to be so; I distrust myself and every human being; I cannot help it. I've struggled with my nature, ever since I was a mere boy, struggled like a giant, but it is all in vain. Love with me is a madness, and makes my misery, not my happiness. Edmund, this shall be an honest moment; I will tell you all that is passing within me, and then you shall hate me, as you ought. Even this night, in the midst of the joy and rapture of welcome, which, I declare to you, I have shared most intensely, the dread that Victorine would love you better than myself has come over me, making 'the sweat-drops of agony moisten my brow.'"

"What can I do to prove, that I could not be a brother's rival? Homer, Victorine loves you; and once loved, you must be loved for ever. I could not if I would be your rival; but rather than inflict upon you, even imaginary suffering, I would return to-morrow to the shores of Europe, and become an alien from my country and home."

"What! and make my mother and sisters curse me? No! I was not born for society, and were I to go to some desert island and live like Robinson Crusoe, away from all mankind, I should only fulfil my destiny. The conscious-

ness that I cast a gloom over all around me, makes me wretched, and yet I cannot change the nature which makes me gloomy, distrustful, jealous and misanthropic. Bear with me, if you can, Edmund, and pity me; for when I make others most unhappy, I am myself most miserable. You were born with a soul of sunshine, and you cannot imagine nor dream of that inward strife and storm, which made me a sullen man, when a mere boy, and will change my young manhood into premature old age."

"Have you ever sought strength of God, Homer? You say I cannot dream of inward strife and storm; but I have passions, strong passions; and if I did not pray for strength to resist their power, I might soon be their slave. I believe in God, and revere his commandments; if I break them, I must incur the penalty of their violation. Do you believe me, when I say this?"

"Believe you, Edmund!"

"Then hear me, Homer! while in the name of that God, I swear, with all the solemnity of an oath, that I will never willingly rival you in fame, fortune, or love; I have no other security under heaven to give. Now let us be brothers indeed,—brothers in heart, as well as name. Let us be true to the memory of our father and the virtues of our mother, and the only rivalships between us be in filial love and devotion."

Edmund stretched out his hand, but Homer hastily rejected it,—and throwing his arms round his brother's neck, leaned his head on his shoulder and wept. What ardent resolutions did he make for the future! What self-renunciations! What promises of amendment! What confessions of wrong, and supplications for forgiveness! But who can say to the waves of human passion, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" Who shall say, when the tempest rises, "Peace, be still;" who, but the Spirit of God!

CHAPTER VIII.

EDMUND'S return was a signal for festive meetings in the neighbourhood and town. Mrs. Worth's family was so much beloved, that every event, whether of joy or sorrow, that occurred in it, excited the sympathy of all who knew it.

It was that joyous season, when every thing animate and inanimate expands and glows, under a bright and genial sky; when the gardens and wildwoods are rich in floral splendour; the water rolls blue in the sunshine, and the meadows and plains wear that magnificent depth of colour, which is seen only in northern latitudes. It was a season for youthful parties, gay gatherings at home and abroad; the morning ride, the evening walk, or the sail in the pleasure-boat under the moonlight or stars. Frank and Laura Wharton came to welcome home the friend of their childhood, and to add to the gayety and variety of the scene. Frank had said, two years before, that Laura was made for something better or worse than a fine lady. Trifling circumstances sometimes speak volumes.

"Oh! what a beautiful picture!" exclaimed she, when Bessy carried her into the studio, where Vivian still lingered over the portrait he loved, adding here and there an almost imperceptible touch; "it looks like an angel, but not like you, Bessy."

"Not like her!" repeated Vivian.

"No! very slightly," replied Laura, making a telescope with her hand, and taking a long look; "I should know it by the hair, and by its being here, but it 's so much flattered, it 's so exquisitely beautiful!"

"It is impossible that it should be flattered!" said Vivian, warmly. "It is impossible even to do justice to the original."

> "Unless to mortal it were given,
> To dip his brush in dyes of heaven,"

Added Frank, who entered at this moment. "I agree with you, that it would be impossible to flatter Bessy."

"Oh yes! I knew you would say so, Frank," cried Laura, with an intelligent smile. "You, who have been Bessy's

professed and favoured admirer so long. But friendship, you know, is impartial; what is blind, I will not say."

Vivian coloured high, and cast a piercing glance at Frank.

"A beautiful picture must always be more beautiful than the original," said Bessy. "There is such a softness, and smoothness in the colours, such perfect repose of features, such indescribable sweetness and calmness of expression. Painting is the dream of life—all the harshness of reality is lost in the brighter, mellower, tints of imagination."

"You still love dreams, Bessy," said Frank; "you never utter a long sentence, without bringing in a dream. Well, I am glad of it, for I am just beginning to find out what sweet things dreams are."

There was something in his tone and manner that called a blush to Bessy's cheek, and a frown to Vivian's brow. It was the first time the idea of the gay Frank as a lover had entered the bosom of Bessy. It was the first time the dread of a rival seriously disturbed the peace of Vivian. Laura had consciously or unconsciously sent a dart that continued to rankle, when the painter was left alone in his studio, and his pencil hung idly in his hands. In this attitude Laura found him, when, after having seen Frank and Bessy seated at a game of chess, she returned in search of her handkerchief, which she was sure she had left on the easel.

"Are you, too, dreaming, Mr. Vivian?" asked she, gayly. "There must be something infectious in the atmosphere, or something irresistible in Bessy's example. Every one dreams but me."

"I have been in a dream, I acknowledge," said Vivian, rising; "and I ought to thank you for awakening me."

"I!" repeated Laura, in a tone of surprise—"I do not understand you. I spoke sportively, but you give me so serious an answer, you have excited my curiosity."

"Pardon me, Miss Wharton, but you made an allusion to your brother, which was exquisitely painful. Will you explain it? Is he, indeed, the favoured lover of the original of that picture?"

Vivian spoke in a hurried, excited tone. He became very pale, and cast down his eyes like a man who does not wish to see the full extent of his danger. Strange thoughts took possession of Laura. She had depreciated Bessy's beauty, because she began to envy its power. She had thrown out

a random remark about Frank, because she thought Vivian would admire her less, if he believed her affections were engaged. She was not prepared to utter a deliberate falsehood, though she had not hesitated to give the most erroneous impressions.

"Ask Bessy," said she, evasively, "she can explain every thing better than I can." Then fearing he might follow her advice, and the benefit of this misunderstanding be lost to herself, she added, "I did not imagine I was revealing any secret. I thought every one knew that they had loved each other from childhood."

"Then it was an early attachment," said Vivian, very calmly.

"Oh! yes—but it was never spoken of seriously, till just before Edmund's departure, when it was all arranged between them." "I have not said what is false," added she to herself, "for Frank did appropriate her to himself, and she never said a word of disapproval. I am sure that is equal to an engagement."

"I am sorry I said any thing about it," continued she, "since it seems to give you so much pain. I beg you not to repeat what I have said to Bessy, for she would never forgive me, and we have always been the most intimate friends—never had a quarrel in our lives."

"I thank you," replied he, coldly, "I will not commit you in any respect. I shall not remain here long to disturb the happiness of any one."

"For heaven's sake, don't let what I have said drive you away. What will they think of it? How strange it will look! Pray, Mr. Vivian, don't be so rash, so precipitate."

"I am not rash, Miss Wharton. Don't you see how very calm I am. Be assured, I will never make so poor a return for your kindness as to betray your confidence."

He began to gather up his brushes and pencils; and Laura felt that her presence was undesirable. She stole out of the room, and entered the one where Bessy sat, impelled by an undefinable dread of Vivian's seeking an immediate explanation. The sight of Bessy's sweet, unconscious face, leaning over the chess-board, gave her a pang of remorse. She seemed absorbed in her game. Her head rested on her right hand, her left held back the ringlets from her brow.

"How lovely she looks!" thought Laura; "I am sure Frank loves her, whether she love him or not; and I have only done her a kindness, if I have saved her from having her affections entangled by a poor painter."

She soon saw the figure of Vivian standing against one of the pillars of the piazza, and she could not bear the sight. She arose to find Emma, thinking she could look upon her with an untroubled conscience.

Bessy, absorbed in the interest of the game, and with her face inclined from the window, was not aware of the vicinity of Vivian, though her thoughts had been wandering towards him more frequently than she would be willing to acknowledge. "I wish I knew what to do with this bishop," said she, thoughtfully, "it troubles me."

"I could tell you a very good use to make of it," said Frank, "if you would let me."

"Nay, Frank, I am not in a jesting mood. I'm in a state of serious perplexity."

"And so am I. This bishop does not trouble you half so much, as a certain gentleman troubles me—this Vivian."

"How foolish!" exclaimed Bessy, hastily. "If you do not attend to your game, I shall check-mate you, though you have so much the advantage."

"But, seriously, Bessy, I want to know something more about this Vivian."

"This Vivian, as you are pleased to call him, sir, is ready to answer for himself," said a haughty voice, and Vivian suddenly entered the room. Bessy started up in terror at this sudden apparition, and Frank also rose, though he gave back the haughty glance of Vivian, with one of equal scorn.

"What do you wish to know of me, sir," repeated he,—"I can save this lady the trouble of replying."

"This lady!" cried Bessy. "Oh, Vivian, do not speak so angrily. If you knew Frank as well as I do, you would not regard it. He always speaks in that familiar way. If he were speaking of me to you, he would call me, this Bessy."

"I said I wanted to know you better, sir," exclaimed Frank, "and I repeat what I said. Do you understand me?"

"You never will know me better, unless you seek me under another roof than this. I will never make this house a

scene of contention. But if we meet again, sir, beware of the language you use."

"Oh, Frank! what have you done?" cried Bessy, as Vivian, with hasty step, passed over the threshold, crossed the piazza, and was gone."

"Done! nothing! If I had done what I ought, I should have knocked him flat on the floor. What business had he to be listening; I am sorry I did not chastise him for his insolence. But, Bessy, you are weeping. I did not mean to wound your feelings. I would not do it for any earthly consideration. Don't weep any more,—don't Bessy,—I cannot bear to see you weep."

Bessy sat, her face covered with her hands, leaning over the back of a chair. Every now and then the sound of a suppressed sob echoed dolefully through Frank's heart; he longed to comfort her; to take her in his arms; to wipe away her tears and tell her how beautiful, and amiable, and angelic he thought her. But he did not even dare to take a seat near her at this moment, such a sudden transition was wrought in his feelings. He felt as if he never more would venture to approach Bessy with familiarity; that instead of the free, gay rallies, reckless of offence, he was become the modest and respectful young man. But along with this gentleness and respect for Bessy, there was a burning desire to humble and exile *that* Vivian, as he could not for his life help calling him. What business had he to put on such aristocratic airs, and presume to monopolize Bessy, to the exclusion of her best and earliest friends; he, a mere stranger, whom, six weeks ago, nobody knew, and for whom six weeks hence, nobody would care?

"Won't you speak to me, Bessy?" said he, at length. "I'll call Vivian back if you wish it—though I'll be sure to say it's for your sake, not mine."

"No, no, no!" answered she, without raising her head; "say nothing to him, nor to any one else. I do not wish to see him. But we have all been so happy together; even Homer has been joyous at times; and now it has all passed away like a dream."

"We shall be happier than ever," cried Frank, emboldened by the sound of her voice. "I'm sure I have a right to think that you should care more for me, your life-long friend, than the acquaintance of a few passing weeks.

I'm sure *that*—I mean Vivian, cannot think half so much of you as I do, who have known and loved you so long."

"Yes! we've always been like a brother and sister, Frank."

"I don't mean this brother and sister sort of love, Bessy; that passed very well two or three years ago, but I've found out, there's a great deal stronger love than what I feel for Laura."

"Don't speak of it now, Frank; my head aches and throbs, and I know not what I am saying." She rose and walked to the door, still veiling as much as possible her flushed and tearful face. Pausing a moment on the threshold, she said, "Promise me, Frank, that there shall be no more angry words or looks. If they are given to you, return them not; speak not of it to Edmund, and forget it yourself."

"I would do any thing in the world for your sake, Bessy, but I cannot promise, if any one gives a blazing glance, to look pleased and smile; I will try, however, to swallow my anger."

Frank checked himself, for he found he was talking to empty walls; Bessy was gone and no trace left of her, but her handkerchief which lay upon the floor, by the chair over which she had leaned; he took it up, it was moistened by her tears. His heart felt strangely moved by the impression of Bessy's tears; and by the knowledge that, however unintentionally, he had been the cause. Was it love for Vivian that made her weep? No! he would not admit that truth; she was far more distant and reserved to Vivian than to himself; and he recollected that several times when, on entering the room, they had both offered her a chair, she had taken his in preference to Vivian's. This and several similar recollections warmed and softened Frank's usually gay heart. He grew sentimental over this handkerchief moistened by the tears of youth and beauty. He folded it carefully, and placing it in his bosom, secretly vowed to devote himself henceforth valiantly and constantly to this fairest, sweetest, best and loveliest of all created beings. Frank certainly was in love; he had placed a maiden's handkerchief next his heart, and his thoughts ran into superlatives. He had no opportunity of proving his knight-errantry in the course of the day. Vivian did not appear, and Bessy remained in her own room, on the plea

of a sick-headache, that invariable excuse for a sick and aching heart. In the evening, as Estelle sat in the window of Aunt Patty's chamber, sewing on the immortal counter pane, she saw the figure of Vivian walking slowly up and down the garden walks, and sometimes he stopped and stood still a long time, and looked down upon the ground. The child wondered at his protracted absence, and his now lonely walk; a flight of steps ran from Aunt Patty's chamber into the garden; and down those steps Estelle flew, and in a moment was at Vivian's side.

"Why don't you come in," said she, in a sweet, earnest tone, which it would have been hard to resist. "You have been gone so long, and you walk about so lonely."

"I'm going away, Estelle, and I don't like to bid good-by to friends; you must do it for me."

"Going away!" repeated Estelle, sorrowfully. "Oh! Mr. Vivian, don't say so—you haven't painted Aunt Patty's likeness and mine; and Aunt Patty may not live till you come back again."

"I shall never come back again," cried Vivian, in an agitated voice, putting his arms round Estelle and kissing her cheek; "but I never shall forget you."

"Come up in Aunt Patty's room, and tell her the reason," said the child, pulling Vivian by the hand, all the time she ran up the steps. "Come and see Aunt Patty, for I know it isn't right to go away so."

Vivian found himself in Aunt Patty's presence, without any volition of his own; who smiled, nodded, and pointed to a chair, while Estelle still held his hand as if she feared he would vanish from her sight. "See, what a beautiful counterpane Estelle is making for me," exclaimed Aunt Patty, whose ruling passion became more and more absorbing. "I was afraid the pieces would get lost after a while, and thought I would have them put all together; I mean to give it to my niece that's married first—Emma or Bessy. I expect it will be Bessy, for Emma is weakly, as I used to be, and serious. I always thought young Mr. Frank and Bessy would make a match; they used to play together when they were children. Here's a piece of Bessy's frock, that she wore the first time you ever came here. It's blue, shaded in a kind of shell work; you know blue becomes Bessy, she's so fair. Blue always becomes

a fair complexion; I never looked well in blue, because I was a brunette—red suited my complexion best. But I needn't talk about complexions now; I'm too old—all colours are alike to me."

Aunt Patty had mounted her hobby, and she went on, telling the histories of myriad shreds, red, pink, and brown; but Vivian heard her not. He gazed on the sample of shaded blue, as if he had not the power to withdraw his eyes.

"May I keep this, Aunt Patty?" said he, at length; "it will remind me of you, when I am gone."

"Yes, keep it," replied she, "if you like; you've crumpled and twisted it so, it would'nt do to put in the quilt, and I have another piece like it. But what makes you look so sad, and talk about being gone? Has any thing happened? Have you had any bad news from home?"

Vivian turned away his face and appeared intently occupied with Estelle's work. "Oh! Aunt Patty," cried Estelle, beseechingly; "he's really going away, and I shall not have your picture after all—and what shall we all do without him? and what will sister Bessy say," continued she, turning to Vivian, "who loves to talk to you so much?"

"Bessy will not care when I am gone," replied he in a softer tone. "There are others here whom she loves better than me."

"Yes, mother and Edmund—but what of that? She can love ever so many at a time."

Estelle could not comprehend the dark expressions of Vivian's face, as she uttered this consoling remark; she began to be afraid of him. He spoke so strange, and looked so wild and pale.

"Don't plague him about my picture, child," said Aunt Patty; "it isn't worth thinking about. I was willing to have it taken to please the children, so they might remember how poor old Patty looked when she's dead and gone. I intended to be painted in my thunder and lightning calico, as Edmund calls it; here is a piece of it; but it's no matter. it wouldn't have been fit to put up, by the side of Bessy's, any way. Bless her heart, here she comes, looking as pale as a sheet. No, she's as fresh as a rose now."

Bessy opened the door, unconscious of the guest that honoured Aunt Patty's quiet apartment. She would have

retreated, but Estelle ran to her, and told her almost breathlessly, that Vivian was going away, without bidding any one good-by: and that he was never coming back again; and that he did'nt believe she cared whether he went or not.

"Am I so lightly given up, then?" thought Bessy, "that for a single offence from Frank, he is willing to go, without a word of explanation, or even one kind good-by? Is this the end of all his fond, flattering words? Is this the dark wakening of my life's young dream?"

That pride, which is ever ready to gird and sustain the female heart, in the hour of trial and desertion, forbade Bessy from manifesting any weakness, or regret, before one who could trifle so wantonly with her feelings.

"Beg him to stay, Bessy," whispered Estelle.

"If Vivian wishes to go, why should we wish him to remain?" asked Bessy, in a cold, constrained voice.

"When I know that my presence is intrusive," cried Vivian, in the same tone, "it is natural that I should wish to depart."

There was a long pause. Aunt Patty took off her spectacles, wiped them over and over again, put them on, and looked at Vivian and Bessy, as if she thought she had made a mistake in their identity. In the simplicity of a lonely life, which the sunbeams and clouds of love never passed over—the roses and thorns of love never strewed—the hush and the tempest of love never agitated; she was unskilled in that lore, which could have enabled her to interpret the mysterious change in her young friends.

"Well," said she—for she had a great horror of long pauses, and was always the first to break them—"if you must go, may God bless you, and take you in his holy keeping. You have a great talent intrusted to you. It isn't everybody that can copy the most marvellous works of God, as you can. It's like making the deaf hear, the dumb speak, and bringing the dead to life. It's like taking the power of the Almighty into your own hands, and making a new creation. Then there is such a comfort in it, when friends are dead and gone. If the Lord should please to take away Bessy, we would never feel as if we had really lost her, as long as we had that sweet, beautiful picture of yours to look upon."

Aunt Patty, in her eloquence, had touched a tender chord.

The idea that Bessy might die, and all that remained of her, be that cold, still, bright shadow, the mockery of life, was more than Vivian could bear. He turned and looked fixedly on her. She sat with her head resting on her hand; her eyes bent upon the floor. She looked as if she had suddenly frozen in that attitude, so cold, still, and white she looked.

"Are you ill, Bessy?" cried he suddenly, approaching her.

She shook her head, and put out her hand, with a deprecating motion. There was a quick revulsion in his feelings.

"She repels me from her," thought he, "even at this moment. She has loved *him* from childhood. She is betrothed to him, yet she smiled and listened to my vows. So young, so fair, yet so false! She has broken my heart—blasted my fame, and withered my ambition. I never shall touch pencil, brush, or canvas more. All my glorious visions are fled. Nothing is left but a wide, dreary, blank—an aimless, joyless, loveless existence, or perchance an early, undistinguished grave."

As these thoughts rolled darkly through Vivian's mind, the few, short words, "Farewell, Bessy," were all that escaped from his lips. She was conscious of a quick, convulsive pressure of the hand, the sound of a shutting door, and then it seemed to her, that there was a strange mingling of light and sound in her head; a rushing, and roaring, and flushing, that made her giddy, and sick, and faint.

"Don't look so, Bessy," cried Estelle. "What's the matter? Speak to me, Bessy. Oh, Aunt Patty, she can't. Give her your salts. Where's your hartshorn? Where's some water?"

Estelle ran about the room for salts, hartshorn, and water, but neither could be found, and she was on the wing in another direction, when Aunt Patty arrested her, by suggesting a novel expedient.

"Give her a pinch of snuff, Estelle, quick. It will be as good as a dose of hartshorn. It will make her sneeze, and that will bring her to herself again."

Estelle, in her fright, snatched the snuff-box from Aunt Patty's tremulous hand, and rushed up to Bessy, who still looked so frozen and white, that it made her shudder. But the confusion in Bessy's senses had subsided so far that she

could hear distinct sounds; and Aunt Patty's proposal excited so much horror and disgust, that she drew back her head, in time to avoid the odious contact. Aunt Patty took the real old-fashioned, yellow Scotch snuff, and though it did not mar perceptibly the beauty of her own face, it would have left a very disfiguring cloud round Bessy's fair nose.

"There, there, the very smell has revived her," cried Aunt Patty; "there's nothing like snuff, after all. Go quietly to bed, darling, and don't get to thinking and dreaming too hard. You've walked about too much in the moonshine lately, and I've always heard it was bad for the brains. They say, though, that angels fly about in the moonlight, and I've sometimes thought that I've seen them sitting under the trees, and on the banks of the water, where it shines like silver. Well, if they do come down from the skies, I know they will watch by your pillow; so good-night again, darling, and, as old Doctor Watts says, "Holy angels guard thy bed."

The poetical chords in Bessy's soul vibrated in gentle response to Aunt Patty's kind good-night. She bent her head to receive her parting kiss, and retired with Estelle, who watched her with anxious tenderness, fearing the return of that pale, death-like look.

The sudden departure of Vivian caused quite a sensation, when it was made known at the breakfast table. Laura, who well knew the cause, was the most astonished of all. She could not imagine, she could not conceive, the motive of his absconding so. Perhaps he had been detected in some disgraceful act, and was fleeing from the penalty of the violated law. At any rate, it was very rude and ungrateful in him, to leave the family so abruptly.

Edmund, though he thought his conduct very strange and unaccountable, warmly defended him from Laura's sweeping charges. He was willing to stake his life on the purity of his moral character. Such genius, enthusiasm, and sensibility, never could be the accompaniments of meanness and vice. Edmund reasoned with the warmth of a young and generous spirit, which, incapable of any thing low and degrading, can hardly believe in the existence of vice.

Mr. Selwyn smiled with more worldly wisdom, though he loved the confidence that was born of rectitude and innocence. He was mortified at Vivian's departure; for if it

should really result in guilt, it would prove an error in his judgment, which he seldom committed.

Mrs. Worth and Emma said but little, but they thought of Bessy, and had some sad forebodings.

Frank thought it a fit of well-founded jealousy, but he would not betray his thoughts.

Estelle sat in silence, looking "unutterable things," for she had promised Bessy not to mention his strange visit to Aunt Patty's room.

What Bessy thought and felt was confessed to her mother the first time they were alone. All the love, hope, joy, fear and anguish of that pure, imaginative, loving, too susceptible heart, was poured into the heart of one, who gave back the tenderest sympathy, blended with the most judicious counsels; one, in whom the experience of riper years was softened by the still living and glowing memories of youth.

"Oh, mother!" cried Bessy, at the close of this long, affectionate interview, "how grateful I am for your kindness, gentleness, and sympathy! You do not blame me for my weakness and folly. I will struggle against it for your sake. And yet I was so happy in his companionship. After he came, it seemed as if new faculties and sensibilities dawned in my soul, as stars gleam out thick and bright on the firmament when the wand of night is lifted. Yet he was not like night. He was too bright, too glorious for night. A thousand times, dear mother, I've felt as if I had existed before, and feelings and events seemed but the reminiscences of another shadowy world. Perhaps you do not understand me, but I'm sure my spirit lived before it animated this dust of mine. Yes, lived, and glowed, and loved. And when Vivian came, my heart sprang to meet him, as one known, loved, and remembered; the being of a fairer clime than this. Oh! what a change there was! The skies looked bluer—the sun brighter, the birds sang a more melodious song; even your smile, my mother, seemed softer and sweeter than ever. I have lived, for a little time, the life of an angel; and now it is all over, and we will never speak of it again. And I will try to smile, and let no one see that it is an effort to do so. I will henceforth live nearer to God."

Bessy looked up with such a heavenly expression, that her

mother thought she was too much assimilated to angels for an earthly union. Perhaps, like the daughter of Jephthah, she was about to be sacrificed on his altar, in the dew of her youth, and the light of her beauty—a sweet, fragrant offering, holy and acceptable in his sight.

"God bless thee, my child, and give thee strength to keep thy holy resolution," said Mrs. Worth, tenderly embracing her; while her eyes were moistened with tears. "Take comfort from my experience. I have wept over the loss of one, whom I loved with a love to which that you feel for Vivian must be light. Yes! Bessy, for it grew stronger, and deeper, and holier by time; yours is but the flower that blooms in the sunshine, which a summer gale may destroy; mine the tree, rooted into the soil, that must be rent asunder ere it withers and falls. You remember when you were made fatherless; you remember well the first dark days of my widowhood; but you never knew, none but my Maker knew, the desolation, the agony of my soul, till I learned submission to His will; and could say that it was good that I had been afflicted. You are very young, my Bessy, and if this first blossom of love is doomed to an untimely blight, others will bloom, to sweeten and gladden your youth. Nor has the grave interposed its cold, deep barrier between you and the object of your affections. Life and hope, and perhaps joy and love, remain for you. In the mean time, let us live nearer to each other and to God, and if we cannot find happiness we shall be blessed with content."

From this time, a holier, closer, tenderer union than had ever before united them, existed between Mrs. Worth and her beautiful child. They had looked into each other's hearts, as the moon looks into the deep silent waters; reflecting light, beauty, and peace.

CHAPTER IX.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Mrs. Worth, there dwelt two aged women, who were called, *par excellence*, the good old ladies. They sustained the relation of mother and daughter to each other; the latter having seen her threescore, the former her fourscore years and ten. They belonged to the nominal poor of the town, but when their misfortune and infirmities first threw them on the public for support, they were so much distressed at the idea of going to the almshouse, that a number of individuals pledged themselves to furnish them the means of subsistence, in a small, but comfortable cabin, which was gratuitously offered them. Their wants were but few, nor would they want their little long; they were called, through universal courtesy, old Lady Graves and old Lady Paine. Strangers would have thought there were no other old ladies in town, for they were always called *the* old ladies; a distinction they obtained as much by their piety and tenderness, as by their superior age. The children of Mrs. Worth had from earliest childhood considered it one of their greatest pleasures to visit this little cabin, and be the almoners of their mother's bounty. They had many sweetheart gifts of their own, too, to offer, such as flowers and fruit; and many a delicacy which they denied themselves, that they might earn the blessing of the aged. The old ladies still called them their little benefactresses; and Edmund was their dear, good, darling boy; though his head now towered over theirs. He had remembered them even in transatlantic shores; and brought them spectacles, which they thought had rejuvenated their eyes; so light-giving and faith-inspiring is benevolence. The path which led to their dwelling was a straight, narrow lane, margined on each side with green; and it was a smooth, beaten track. The grass was never suffered to grow in the centre, nor to be wantonly trampled down at the sides. In winter, when the snow came drifting down, covering the ground with one broad, deep white crust, some kind hand always cut a nice trench up to the

old ladies' door. When the farmers turned out in a body to carry wood to their minister, and the sleds moved in long procession down the street, leaving a shining path behind them, a load was always left quietly in the old ladies' yard, and it was sure to be nicely cut and piled, for their handy use. Truly the path of poverty and age was smoothed before these time-worn pilgrims, as they travelled hand in hand towards the grave, looking backward with gratitude, and forward with faith, to the green fields of the promised land. These humble women played no conspicuous part in the drama of life; and it may perhaps be asked, why are they introduced in this collection of family pictures? Because they linked the young, whose history we are writing, with the past generations,—because that low cabin was the scene of many of their purest joys; and more than all, because, in drawing pictures, we love contrasts of light and shade; and nothing can be more beautiful than to see the glow and brightness of youth side by side with the pallor and dimness of age.

Frank called these old ladies the belles of the town, and laughed at Edmund for his devotion to them; yet he had often been detected in stealthily sending large packets from the stores, which came to them like fairy gifts, without a name. Laura thought it very ridiculous to make such a fuss about the old grannies, and wondered how the graceful Edmund and the beautiful Bessy could endure such crones. One evening Edmund entered the cottage to avoid a shower, that fell just as he was passing. The door was open and he stood a moment on the threshold unobserved, to contemplate a picture exceedingly beautiful in his eyes. The elder of the aged sat in an arm-chair, her knitting in her hand, one needle shining under the border of her crimped cap, above her silver hair; her ball pinned to her frock; a heart-shaped knitting sheath fastened to her side. The mildness and innocence of second childhood softened a countenance no longer agitated by the storms of human passion. The waters were all still; not even a ripple disturbed the reflection of life's setting sun, that dipped his mellowed beams in the waves. On her left, the venerable daughter sat, bending over a little wheel, her inseparable companion; whose low, monotonous humming constituted the music of her existence, for she was deaf, and the usual

tone of the human voice did not penetrate her ear. She could hear, however, faintly, the buzzing of her own little wheel, and she said it sounded like a distant waterfall; and it made her feel so peaceful, she loved to hear it. Now she leaned forward and wet her fingers in the gourd-shell, that hung by the distaff; then she twisted the shining flax into almost invisible thread, her foot patting the treadle board, the pedal to this harp of industry. Between these two were seated a youthful maiden, who looked like a bright flower springing up amid alpine snows; with her pure white robes, her dark, unbound hair, her face partially inclined over the book of God, which lay upon her knees, from which she was reading to the two aged Christians. Victorine had never appeared so interesting to the eyes of Edmund. He had scarcely looked upon her lately; so fearful was he of exciting the jealous madness of his brother. But now, withdrawn from the glance of that dark eye, which watched his every motion, unseen too by herself, he dared to gaze upon her and think that time had wrought marvellous changes, since she was the wild, gipsy girl of the French menagerie. There was something soft and pensive in the expression of her usually too bright and flashing eye; and the holy act in which she was engaged threw an air of sanctity and spirituality around her virgin form. She was reading the Psalms of David, and their melody fell sweetly on his ear:

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

While she read this sublime prayer of Moses, which is included in the hosannas of the sweet singer of Israel, the spinner leaned over the distaff, for the clear voice of Victorine glided through the bars that obstructed her hearing, like the song of a bird through its grated cage, and the octogenarian dropped her knitting in her lap, and raised her glimmering eyes to heaven, murmuring in response: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been." Edmund would not have interrupted this beautiful scene, had all the waters of the deluge been pouring upon him; but when Victorine arose and laid the Bible upon the

little table, beside the emblematic hour-glass, he crossed the threshold and was welcomed, as he always was, with grateful smiles and trembling pressures of the hand. "Bless the dear boy," exclaimed old Lady Graves; "he has his father's steps and his mother's smile. I should know when he entered, were I blind. Bless me, how the young plants shoot up. I remember when your mother came to town, a lovely, blooming bride, as young as Victorine; and your father had the princely air which you have now; and now he's mouldering away in the grave, and you, who were not then, stand tall and man-like before me, as if you had risen up out of his ashes. Alack-a-day! what changes there are in the world! And I, poor old creature, who felt as old then as I do now, may live to see the day when your children may be dandled on my knees, nor fear the face of a hundred years."

"I shall never marry anybody, dear grandmother," answered Edmund, smiling. "I think it likely I shall live an old bachelor, and take care of mother till she gets to be as aged as you are now."

"You!" said the old lady, shaking her head. "No, no: the Lord never created you for an old bachelor. I was just thinking, when you came in, what a beautiful match you and Victorine would make,—both so good, and kind, and handsome; and living so close together, too: its natural to be thinking about it."

"Somebody else is thinking about it," said Edmund, trying to speak with indifference. "Homer would not like to hear you unite any name but his with Victorine's. He had the advantage of me whilst I was the other side of the ocean."

"He!" repeated the old lady, in a sorrowful tone; "he's too dark and gloomy to make her, or anybody else happy. When he was a little boy, no higher than my knee, he used to sit, like a raven, in a corner, and refuse to play, because, he said, nobody cared any thing about him, and he wouldn't go where he wasn't wanted. I love him, because he's the son of your mother; and I love every thing that belongs to her,—even the blades of grass that grow round the stepping-stones of her door: but I don't want him to marry that young thing, who's got such a tender heart; it would break if it were handled roughly. Don't

be angry with an old woman for speaking her mind so plain; the Lord fixes all these things in his own almightiness, without taking counsel from any one; and I don't believe he ever matched these two."

Edmund felt that his old friend was leading him into dangerous ground; and he saw, by Victorine's crimsoned cheek and embarrassed air, that she was anxious to evade the subject. She walked to the window, and casting an uneasy glance abroad, declared the rain was subsiding, and she feared they would be wondering at her long absence. Edmund rose to accompany her; he had no umbrella, but he thought it would be safer to walk a short distance in the rain, than remain to hear a conversation of which Homer was the theme. They went out together, and had walked a few steps, when Edmund, suddenly recollecting himself, exclaimed—"Return, Victorine, and I will go and bring you an umbrella and shawl. Strange, I should have been so careless of your comfort."

"No," answered she, hastily; "I love to walk in the rain: nothing exhilarates my spirits so much; and to walk with you, Edmund, reminds me of 'Auld lang syne.' You are almost like a stranger to me now."

Victorine sighed, and Edmund knew that his reserve and coldness, contrasted with his former brotherly familiarity, must appear very strange and unkind to her. He could not tell her it was to avoid exciting his brother's jealousy, that he imposed such a restraint on himself. He preferred bearing the reproach of caprice and inconsistency, which, he doubted not, she laid upon him, than expose Homer to blame.

"I am sorry to have you get so wet," said he, taking off his hat, and holding it against the wind so as to keep the rain, which now fell faster and faster, from beating in her face. Victorine protested against this gallantry, but Edmund reminded her of the days of his boyhood, when he was proverbial for seeking the baptism of a summer shower. There was something exhilarating, as Victorine said, in hurrying through the fast-dropping rain; and the reminiscences of childhood, thus awakened, drew them closer together, and made Edmund forget, for a moment, that he was no longer a boy, free as the wind, and with a heart as transparent as the rain-drops. Their gay laughs

mingled together; Victorine's long hair blew against his cheeks, and fluttered among his dark-brown locks. They were children again, in this merry plight, and could not help feeling sorry when they reached the threshold, where they stopped, panting for breath, with glowing cheeks, and wet, disordered hair.

"Wasn't that a glorious run," cried Victorine; "I wouldn't have missed it for Gilpin's thousand pounds."

Victorine turned her sparkling eyes to Edmund, as she spoke, but a coming figure "cast its shadow before," and prevented his reply. Homer had seen their approach from the window, and the lion passion, lurking in the bottom of his heart, leaped from its covert. Edmund saw, by the expression of his countenance, all that was passing within; and the merry laugh died on his lips. He immediately explained their unexpected meeting, and the circumstances of their return; inwardly reproaching himself for experiencing so much gratification from an accident which caused his brother anguish. But the cloud still lowered on Homer's brow. The shower passed over, and,

> "Far up the blue sky a fair rainbow unrolled
> Its soft-tinted pinions of purple and gold."

Brighter and brighter still glowed its seven-fold beams, till another paler bow appeared within, and still another beauteous apparition, till the triple arch spanned the heavens, reflected its dyes on the green, glittering earth and panting leaves, and mirrored itself in the glassy depths of the streams. The family all gathered in the piazza, to gaze on the messenger of peace, standing, like the apocalyptic angel, with one foot on land, and one foot on sea, its garments dipped in the sun; and they gazed till the glory gradually departed, and nothing was left but a soft, gray expanse, soon covered with the deeper gray of twilight. Bessy, at Mr. Selwyn's request, repeated Campbell's magnificent address to the rainbow, which, he said, was the most unrivalled of poems; but Emma ventured to assert, much as she admired the stanzas, the simple and sublime annunciation in scripture, of the "bow of God set as a covenant on the retreating clouds of the deluge," surpassed the descriptions of human genius.

Yes: the shower passed away; the glorious rainbow faded away; the deep gray of twilight blackened into night, yet

still the cloud lowered on Homer's brow. The lamps were lighted. The evening circle gathered together, still Homer, like a broken link in the family chain, remained apart, and the brightness of that chain was impaired. Mr. Selwyn and Emma sat down at a game of chess, his favourite recreation, and one which suited well her serious and abstracted turn of mind. Since he had discovered her talent, he had so frequently called it into requisition, that now, whenever he began to arrange the men on the board, she considered it a mute challenge, and immediately relinquished whatever occupation in which she was engaged, grateful that she could contribute, in any degree, to the amusement of so noble and generous a being. Like all great men, he had his weaknesses; and one was, he did not like to be defeated. Emma played well enough to interest him, without the fear of being often beaten, and, on that account, he preferred her to more experienced champions. Emma had tact enough to perceive this, and she never tried to play too well. Absorbed in this quiet, intellectual game, the inequalities of Homer's manner, which often threw a shade over the evening circle, were seldom perceived by them. Victorine played some of her sweetest songs in concert with Edmund's flute; but the evil spirit departed not. She continued to play, however, after Edmund had laid down his flute; and caught up, in a wild, brilliant manner, snatches of melody, changing as the notes of a mocking-bird, as capricious, and as sweet.

"Oh! Victorine," exclaimed Laura, throwing down a book with which she had been playing, rather than reading; "have mercy on our ears. You've banished Bessy already. She seems to have lost her love for music, lately. Why, what has inspired you so, to-night? That fine run in the rain with Edmund? How happened you to meet at those *evening belles*, as Frank calls them? I really think it must have been a concerted plan. You and Edmund both look guilty:—see, how she blushes! Goodness! what's the matter with Homer? What sent him out so suddenly? Frank, didn't you observe how strange Homer looked?"

"How can I hear or observe any thing," cried Frank, "when you overpower every thing with your rattling tongue? Victorine, don't mind her nonsense, but play my

favourite song, before you rise. I've been waiting patiently for it the whole evening."

Frank did observe, with pain and displeasure, the effect of his sister's levity; and sought to avert the attention of Victorine.

"I cannot play any more, to-night, Frank," cried she, "though you are very kind to ask it."

She rose, with a heightened colour, and left the room; giving Laura a look, as she passed, of unutterable reproach.

"Mercy! what a dull place this is getting to be!" cried Laura, trying to look innocent. "One cannot say a word in jest, but everybody takes it up as seriously as if they were going to fight a duel. Look at Emma, glued down to that chess-board, her head leaning on one hand, the other stretched out over the queen, like a Roman shield in the day of battle. I don't believe she would hear if seven thunders were pealing in her ears." Emma looked up with a sweet smile that belied her words. Laura lowered her voice, and continued:—"Do you know, Frank, that I think Emma is really half in love with old Mr. Selwyn?" Emma did not look up again, but her pale cheek turned red, and the next move she lost her queen.

Mr. Selwyn, of whom it might in truth be said, that while he was playing chess, he would not hear if seven thunders uttered their voice, kept calling out check, check, till she had no place to turn, and, gladly surrendering, she retreated from the board, giving Laura a mild, but very rebuking glance, as she, too, passed out of the room.

"Why, where is everybody going?" exclaimed Laura; "there must be something extraordinary to see." She went out herself, with the waltzing step, leaving Frank seriously angry at her undaunted levity.

In the mean time Victorine wandered in the piazza, whither Homer had wandered before, and they met, face to face, beneath the glimmering stars, that flashed here and there, in the "darkening firmament of June."

"Victorine," said he, suddenly, "walk with me in the garden—I cannot speak to you here."

"It is damp after the shower," answered she, with a slight shudder.

"You did not fear the dampness," replied he in a bitter tone, "when you were clinging to Edmund's arm."

"Come," cried she, "I do not fear it now;" and yielding to his motion, as he drew her hand round his arm, she followed him through the garden walks, into an arbour whose shade, soft and refreshing, in a dry, sultry evening, now drooped heavily over them, surcharged with the rain and the dew.

"Your hand is very cold, Victorine—I do not wish to chill you."

"It is not half so cold as my heart. There is nothing so chilling, so freezing as suspicion."

"I know that, but too well. I feel now as if a girdle of ice were round my heart. But certainty is not suspicion. Victorine, I *know* that you love Edmund."

"Homer, I came here to be catechised, examined, questioned, and cross-questioned. I expected such an inquisition, and I can bear it. But I did not come here to be insulted, and I will not bear it." The quick-flowing blood of the French rushed in a burning current to the face of Victorine, though darkness rested upon it as a veil.

"Stay," cried he, forcibly detaining her, as she attempted to leave the grotto—"it is not an insult to assert a fact, visible as the sun at noonday. When did you ever manifest in my company the joy, the rapture, that beamed in your eyes this day, under circumstances that would have drowned a common emotion? When did you ever give me such a look as you turned on Edmund, when the sight of me seemed to change you into stone? Why go away in stealth to a spot, which you knew Edmund daily visits, if it were not in the hope, the certainty, of meeting him, unconstrained by my presence? Victorine, you are silent—you cannot answer me."

"Can not answer you!" repeated she, indignantly, "what use in reasoning with a madman! And yet I will reply, in justice to myself, not you. How can my eyes beam with rapture on one, whose brow is ever clouded by suspicion, or darkened by jealous passion? As well might the volcano wonder that the flowers of the valley withered under its breath. As well might the ice marvel that it chills the breast on which it falls, as you, distrustful, jealous, and un-

just, as you are, as you wonder that I cannot look on you with joy. You accuse me of visiting by stealth a place familiar to us all, as our own family hearth; where we all go and come, without ceremony or care, and where I was as likely to meet you, as Edmund. Yes! it was likely I went by stealth, as if ashamed of my purpose, under the light of the sun; and, it was likely, too, that I meditated falsehood and guilt, by the side of those aged ones, almost enveloped with the shadows of the grave, with the word of God upon my knee, and its sacred texts upon my lips! Oh, shame on you, Homer!—shame on your unmanly accusations. I care not for them—I scorn them all; but it grieves me, it pains me, to see you sunk in my estimation, unworthy of my respect, an object of pity and condemnation."

"All this from you, Victorine!" cried he, in a subdued voice."

"Yes," answered she, excited beyond the power of repressing her emotions; "all this, and more. You must read my character better. You looked upon me first as a gay, sportive girl, with more vivacity than feeling, whose sallies of mirth amused even you. You believed me next a fond, confiding maiden, with more tenderness than pride, whose love, once won, must be an inalienable possession. You do not know me yet. I grant that I have gayety, and tenderness, and trust, but I have an independent spirit, too, that will not brook the vassalage of your passions; an elastic one, that rebounds when it is trampled upon; a strong one, that would rend asunder the bonds that confine it, were they bars of iron and triple steel."

Homer listened in amazement at this burst of indignant and outraged feeling from the usually gay and tender Victorine. The soft, young girl was converted into the accusing judge, ready to pronounce upon him the stern sentence of the law. She seemed lost to him for ever. His own folly and madness had sealed his doom. Like the base Judean, he had thrown from him a gem richer than all his tribe, and he must mourn through life the consequences of his guilty rashness. A mist was swept from his vision. He saw passion and truth standing side by side, in all their deformity and purity, and he wondered that he could ever have yielded to the dominion of the former. He remembered the vow

of his generous brother, and he knew that the lips of Edmund had never been polluted by a falsehood. He loathed himself—he repented in dust and ashes. As these thoughts revolved in his mind, he sat with his face buried in his hands, bowed down with the weight of self-humiliation.

Victorine could not see his countenance, but she could see his bowed attitude, and hear the deep sighs, that mingled with the soft moaning of the night-breeze. Indignation instantaneously melted into sorrow. She sat down beside him, and put her hand on his hot brow. "Oh! what a pity," she exclaimed, "that you will not let us love you as we might—that you will not be happy, as you ought. We might live in such love and harmony: such a charming family of brothers and sisters; such a sweet, angelic mother; so many blessings, and so many friends! And then, to crown the whole, such a gracious God to watch over and love us. Look up, Homer, let us try to be happy once more. Let us forget and forgive what we have both said. I have been too much excited, and carried my resentment too far."

"Forgive you," cried he, clasping his arms around her, with a wildness and impetuosity that made her tremble—"I do not merit this gentleness. I deserve nothing but indignation and wrath. I know I am unworthy of your love, and that I have come like a dark shadow over your loveliness and youth. And yet, Victorine, if you only knew how I love you; if you could look into my heart, and see the intensity, the idolatry of my passion; if you could know, while I am torturing you, what agony I am enduring myself, you would pity me as the veriest wretch that ever lived. Would to heaven that I had shut out the first thought of love—that I had never dared to dream of the possibility of your loving me; that I had not encroached on your gentle and pitying nature, and forced you into communion with a spirit like mine. I know that I can never make you happy; that I must ever be subject to these paroxysms of madness, and that I ought at this moment to resign you for ever; and yet the rending asunder of body and soul must be less painful than the idea of such a separation."

Victorine listened tearful and agitated to these impassioned words, and felt herself borne up, on the strong current of his emotions, above all selfish considerations. She cared not

whether she was happy herself or not. She wished Homer had never loved her, so unwisely, so passionately, so jealously; but since he did so love her, she would endeavour to bear with patience the infirmities of his nature. She would repress the delight, pure and innocent as it was, that she felt in Edmund's society, rather than inflict upon him one voluntary pang. She would close every avenue to jealousy, with golden bars that could not corrode. Every look, word, and motion should be schooled to the discipline he required. In this self-sacrificing, martyr-like mood, she was willing to be stretched on the bed of Procrustes, to be tortured into any shape or form, provided she could secure the happiness of Homer.

Victorine forgot that she was the child of impulse, and that she could no more guard herself from its influence, than the young flower can resist the gale that bows its pliant stem.

CHAPTER X.

HAVE you ever seen a clearing-up shower? How, after a long, dreary storm, when the clouds have been gathering, and apparently dispersing, then gathering again, coming down in a heavy, drizzling rain, a darker cloud condenses, the lightning burns on its blackness, the thunder bursts from its bosom, and the drops fall thick and plashing till they mingle in one broad sheet of water, threatening to deluge the earth? Suddenly, the clouds roll back, the blue sky trembles through the chasm, then the sun shines forth in its glory; the birds fly warbling from their coverts, the trees shake the rain-drops from their green leaves, the flowers lift up their fair heads, looking timidly towards heaven, and all nature rejoices as in the morning of its nativity. Then follow long genial days of sunshine, sunshine without a shade, save here and there a solitary white cloud, floating gently along, till it melts in the soft tranquillity of blue. There are clearing-up showers in the moral world, also; when long lowering doubts and sullen suspicions gather into the thunder cloud of passion, which discharges its electric fires, and leaves the heart purified and invigorated.

Victorine now rejoiced in this moral sunshine, and smiled, sang, and sported once more. Bask awhile in this sunshine, thou child of sunny France, and let thy young spirit bathe joyously in its beams; for the dark hour may yet come, and the sunshine depart, and the air blow chill on thy soul.

Do you remember the arbour where Homer and Victorine sat, the night of the clearing-up shower? Will you walk there again, in the calm, glowing twilight, and take a seat by the two, who sit there side by side, in the shadow of those clustering vines? Do not imagine that it is Homer and Victorine, lingering still on the *trysting spot* of their

reconciliation. It is Frank and Bessy,—and by the soft and pensive hour, the retired, romantic place, it may be supposed, they have met to converse on some sentimental theme, and that Vivian has been thus soon supplanted; so fickle is the heart of woman deemed. Will you listen, as their voices sound low, in the hush of that still hour, and decide upon the truth and constancy of Bessy? They have been sitting there all the time yon bird has been singing its vesper hymn to the God of the twilight; and you must discover the secret of their past conversation by the words they are now uttering.

"No, Frank," said Bessy, making a kind of fairy lattice-work of the tendrils of the vine, "I know that my feelings will never change. I grant that all you say is true, that his absence is inexplicable, perhaps unjustifiable, and that I may be doomed to waste the season of youth and hope, in the sadness of memory. I have always loved you as a friend, and had no being come, who awakened all the capabilities my heart has of loving, I might have been satisfied with this gentle feeling, not knowing that a stronger and deeper existed within me. But now it is all in vain. Don't speak of it again, Frank. It makes me very unhappy. It fills me with a sense of injustice and wrong, and yet, if I know my own heart, I have never deceived you. In my wish to be ingenuous, I fear I have sacrificed delicacy to truth, and made an avowal which ought to cover me with blushes."

The sweet roses of modesty did bloom most beautifully for a few moments on Bessy's cheek. The hue of the rose had lately been wanting there.

"Fool that I was," exclaimed Frank, "not to think of this before Vivian came. I never cared about any one but you; but because I was a foolish, hair-brained youth, that liked to make people laugh, you thought I could not think and feel deeply. I did not know how deeply and strongly I could feel myself, till I met that Vivian here, and found him monopolizing you, as all his own. If I had only been first to speak, for I was first to love! He paints divinely, it is true—but who couldn't paint you, Bessy? I could make an angel of you myself, with one stroke of the pencil. He writes charming poetry—so can I. I made more than

fifty verses on you last night. I never wrote any in my life, till you inspired me. Bessy, you could make a painter, a poet, or an orator of me, perhaps a great and good man. If you cast me off, I shall be nothing but a discontented, moping bachelor, who will not live out half his days."

"Now, dear Frank, pray listen to me one moment, even as to a sister; and do not be angry, or think I mock your constancy. But I know your nature, and know that disappointment cannot long rest heavily on you. You will throw off the weight and feel lighter and happier from contrast: and there is one, Frank, whom you have known as long as you have me, ten thousand times better than I am; who might indeed make you a great and good man, and whose affections might possibly be won. By and by, all you now feel for me will pass away like a dream of the morning; every thing earthly will pass away, but she, if you would love her, Frank, she would lead you gently up to heaven, where there are no dreams to delude, but all is glorious reality."

Bessy sighed, and passed her hand over her brow, wishing she had the same calm, angelic temperament of her sister Emma. Frank crushed the grass under his feet; pulled off the twigs of the bower, and strewed them on the ground; then rose and walked backward and forward as far as the length of the arbour would permit, but finding himself compelled to turn too often, he sat impatiently down.

"Don't talk to me of another," said he. "I know whom you mean; she's a dear, good girl, but no more to be compared to you than a glow-worm to a star. I am not thinking of myself now. I don't care for myself. If you were happy, I could willingly hang myself to-morrow. But when I hear you sigh, and look up so sadly, I feel as if a two-edged sword were passing through my body. I'll tell you one thing, Bessy, if it's the last breath I have to utter; if that Vivian does prove to be a rascal, as I'm terribly afraid he is, I'll shoot him, if they put a halter on my neck the next moment."

"Don't shoot *me*, Frank," cried Estelle laughing, and catching his last words, as she bounded into the arbour.

"Bessy, mother says you mustn't stay here any longer, for the dew is beginning to fall. Aunt Patty wants you to cut out some more hexagons for her bed-quilt; and I want you to press those flowers for me, I gathered this morning. Everybody wants you in the house."

"Not Homer, if Victorine is near," said Frank.

"No, perhaps not," answered Estelle, thoughtfully; "they are reading a book together—and Mr. Selwyn is showing some pictures to Emma, and explaining them all beautifully. But Edmund—I know Edmund wants you, for he is sitting alone, looking so serious, with his head leaning on his hand, just so;" and she rested her blooming cheek pensively on the palm of her right hand. Estelle ran before them, to gather flowers, sweeter than ever at that dewy hour.

Frank said in a low voice to Bessy, "Do you know what I have been thinking lately? What if Edmund should love Victorine!"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Bessy, so loud that Estelle dropped her flowers, and looked round,—but the next moment she was on the wing. "Heaven forbid!" continued Bessy, in a lower, more earnest tone. "What wretchedness would it bring on himself! What misery on others! Breathe not such a supposition in Homer's ear, if you would not drive him mad."

"Fear not, Bessy; I have more consideration than you think I have. But I am vexed, that Homer took it into his gloomy head to fall in love with Victorine, while Edmund was away. He isn't fit to be a lover. She thinks she loves him, because he was the first one that ever bowed at her shrine; and she was proud of taming such a lion. But she fears him now, more than she loves him; and at the bottom of her heart, I know she must often wish that Edmund had wooed her, instead of Homer. Who could help loving Edmund? I do not think it any disgrace for a girl to fall in love with him, even unauthorized and unasked. His every glance and smile have witchery in them. Victorine's too—such a splendid girl! I was terribly smitten with her myself, once, when I saw her in that flowered frock. Such an eye! such a mouth! If it had not been for you I

should certainly have rivalled Homer. Fool that I was, to let *that*."

Frank bit his lips, and Bessy could not forbear to smile, though the new idea, which he had suggested with regard to Edmund, filled her with alarm. She had been so selfishly absorbed in her own regrets and sorrows, she had scarcely noticed what was passing around her. She reproached herself for her want of sympathy; her forgetfulness of the happiness of others. When she entered the house, she took a seat by Edmund, who sat as Estelle had described, apart and abstracted; with a paler cheek and sadder brow than she had seen him wear since his return. "How forgetful, how neglectful have I been," thought she, "of this dear, irreproachable brother of mine! How completely swallowed up in self! Shall I brood in sullen secrecy over the image of a stranger, oblivious of one whom I have always loved with such idolizing affections? and he too may be unhappy!"

These self-reproachful thoughts gave an inexpressible softness to her countenance, and tenderness to her manner, as, seated closely at his side, she leaned her arm in his lap, and her radiant ringlets glittered on his breast. There was something so endearing in her attitude, so supplicating in her look, so beautiful and graceful in her whole appearance, that Edmund gazed upon her for a moment as upon a lovely picture; then putting his arm around her, he drew her closer to him, and the shadow passed away from his brow. Estelle came running in, with her white apron full of flowers, and sitting down on the carpet the other side of him, began to arrange them into groups. "Stop," cried Laura, approaching them. "Don't move, any of you; you must be attitudinizing for a picture. I never saw any thing so pretty in my life. I wish Vivian was here. Don't you, Bessy?"

"No: she don't," answered Estelle, covering Bessy's short, quick sigh with the sound of her eager voice. "She wouldn't beg him to stay when I asked her; and she didn't even bid him good-by. I don't like Mr. Vivian at all, for not staying and painting Aunt Patty and me, when he'd got the big canvas all ready. I heard Aunt Patty tell Bessy, the other day, if he did come back,

not to have any thing more to say to him; for she liked Frank the best, after all."

"And did Aunt Patty say that," exclaimed Frank. "Bless the dear old soul! I'll go, this minute, and take a pinch of snuff with her, and praise her bed-quilt till my tongue aches."

"Wait for me," cried Estelle; and gathering her flowers up in her apron, she scattered some of the roses over Edmund's and Bessy's head, and flew off with Frank, to give the rest to her beloved Aunt Patty.

"Edmund," cried Laura, "you are really growing dull. You don't think of making yourself agreeable; you have given up all our pleasant walks and rides, except a walk in the rain, sometimes. I don't believe any one cares about my company. I mean to go home to-morrow."

"No!" said Edmund, catching, by sympathy, her gay tone. "I plead guilty to your charge, but I will redeem my character. I will plan a voyage to the moon, if it please you; or a walk to the summit of Mont Blanc."

"When you run off into impossibles, I know you don't mean to do any thing. If you would plan an excursion to yonder mountain,"—and she pointed to the blue outline of one that gracefully undulated in the distance, on the still, glowing horizon,—"there would be some gallantry, and practicability, too, in the act."

"Your word shall be law!" cried he. "I have been on the summit, and a more enchanting prospect never opened on the ravished eye. The ascent is steep, but the difficulty only adds interest to the expedition. We can ride to the foot of the mountain, and then begin our pedestrian journey. But it will never do for you, Laura; for you cannot go in satin slippers, and you never deign to wear any thing of grosser materials."

"O yes: I would wear wooden shoes, for the sake of the novelty. I am willing to put on a home-spun frock, if you will promise to escort me to that delightful place. I am actually dying of ennui, and the very thought of something new, gives me new life. Bessy, will you go? Abstracted Mr. Homer, and sentimental Miss Victorine,

will you go? Good Mr. Selwyn, and grave Miss Emma, will you go?"

She went gayly from one to the other, making low, sliding courtesies, without waiting for an answer; and laughing at their sudden look of curiosity.

"Go where?" asked Homer; alarmed at the thought of a party of pleasure.

"To that mountain, which always reminds me of Ossian's ghosts, in its mantle of mist," answered Bessy.

"If the mountain cannot come to us, I suppose we can go to the mountain," said Mr. Selwyn, with an assenting smile; and the rest of the evening was employed in arranging this romantic excursion.

They all went out to have a better view of the azure-crowned peak, and lingered till evening set a brilliant diamond on its brow, and then another, till it was encircled by a sparkling bandeau of starry gems. Beautiful did it look, invested with the regality of heaven, in the stillness of the midsummer night.

"What was the name of this beautiful mountain?" perhaps some young geographer may ask; tracing the outlines of the map of imagination, undecided where to pause. Its name might be told,—for it has a name, and it was baptized with the mists of morning, and the dews of evening,—and it is a sweet, euphonious name, given by the Indians, who once hunted at its base. But let it now be incog.

Reader! art thou a stranger, far from the home of thy childhood, and the scenes of thy youth? Does not the thought of the green fields and blue hills of thy native soil make thy pulses quicken, and thy cheek glow? Do you not seem to sit once more under the shade of some dear, familiar tree, planted by the hand of your forefathers, and feel the same gale that fanned your infant brow, rustling through its leaves? In the horizon that bounded your vision, was there one lone hill, rising, like an angel's throne, above the valley that encircled it, which caught the first gleam of the rising sun, and arrested its last purple ray? And has not your mother directed your young eye to its summit, and talked to you of the days of old, when God came down upon the mountains, and hallowed them

with His presence? Of Sinai, with its thunders and lightnings, and thick smoke; of Nebo, where the aged prophet sat and gazed upon that land he was not permitted to enter; or of Calvary, once stained with the Redeemer's blood? If there is one spot among the granite hills, round which such associations cluster, imagine this to be the same, and it will be sacred in your eyes.

By the rising sun,—no: it was long before the rising sun, that Estelle wakened, roused her sisters, and knocked at her brother's door. They were to have a very early breakfast, so as to start before the heat of the day commenced. She had hardly closed her eyes the whole night, she was so excited at the thought of climbing to the tip-top of a mountain, and seeing their own home, too, through a telescope, after she reached there. She felt taller, older, and wiser. She made Aunt Patty promise to sit with her head out of the window all day, so that she could see her too. If she had asked her to step out of the window, on the mountain-top, she would involuntarily have answered, "Yes;" for she never dreamed of saying *No*, to Estelle. The young party were in readiness long before the horses and carriages came to the door, though Laura was the last to make her appearance, as usual, all *à la mode*.

"Now, Laura, you know you can't clamber up the mountain in that dress," cried Frank. "Whoever heard of one's putting on a fine, fashionable silk, to jump about among the rocks and shrubs? Those kid slippers, too, and lace stockings! Look at Emma and Bessy:—they can frisk about as they please, without danger of leaving half their clothes behind them. I beg pardon,—I don't believe Emma ever was guilty of friskiness in her life."

"It is difficult to frisk about, as you say, Frank, with a feeble body," said Emma, with a gentle smile; "but I feel so much stronger and better now, than I once did, I don't think I shall consent to stay in that little cave half-way up, where you talk of depositing me."

"Forgive me, Emma; I didn't mean to remind you of one ill of mortality, this delightful morning. You

looked so bright and rosy, that I forgot you were the invalid."

"She's thinking of what a charming ride she will have with Mr. Selwyn," said Laura. "If I were Emma, I should be tired to death of such an old beau."

"How ridiculous! to call Mr. Selwyn a beau," exclaimed Emma, with some asperity; "and always to be calling him old. He is very far from being an old man; and he has all the warmth and enthusiasm of youth, still."

"I dare say he has," said Frank, laughing; "and he is one of the finest-looking men I ever saw. If I were injured, I would go to him for redress. If I were weak, for protection; if poor, for relief. There, Emma, I have made a speech expressly for you. As for Laura's calling him old, it is nothing but spite,—just as children call every thing old out of their reach. You remember the little boy, who told his mother he hated and despised that old cake, when she was resolute in denying it to him."

Here Frank stopped, and burst into a louder laugh at the sight of Estelle, with a basket on her arm half as large as herself.

"What do you ask for your butter, chickens, and eggs, my little market-woman?" cried he, trying to peep under the lid, to her great displeasure.

"You are so rude, Frank," cried she, pushing him back with a dignified air. "You always pull every thing so. I won't give you any, if you don't let my basket alone."

"Well, if I can't use one sense, I can another; and the nose is as good as the eyes, sometimes. You've got something there that smells very inviting, so I'll be on my good behaviour now. You look like a sweet little flower-girl, with that basket hanging gracefully on your arm, Estelle."

"Oh, I was a big, old, ugly market-woman, just now. You change your tune too quick, Master Frank," cried the child, archly curling her ruby lip.

"I'm glad to see you in such fine spirits, Frank," said Edmund.

"All forced," replied he, sighing, but his deep sigh only

made others smile; "and yet there is something exhilarating in rising so early, breathing the clear morning air, and having the prospect of a fine ride, a fine dinner on the mountain, and ever so many charming adventures."

"Oh, yes!" said Bessy, with one of her long-absent, sunny smiles, "we must have some adventures, indeed. Victorine shall be the gipsy of our party, Homer the seer, and I will be the prophetess; and oh! such visions of glory will I call up, that you will all pray me to spare your aching sight."

"Frank and I will be your knights," said Edmund, rejoicing in Bessy's returning sunshine; "Laura and Emma two ladies fair—and Estelle"—

"Our little market-woman," added Frank.

Here Mr. Selwyn drove up to the door, in a splendid landau, which he had brought from Europe, and which had excited the admiration of the country people. His noble and aristocratic appearance, corresponded well with the elegance of his equipage; and the fashionable Laura would not have disdained a seat at his side. But the hand was first held out to Emma, who sprang in so lightly, that Frank might have accused her of being guilty of friskiness.

"Who else?" said Mr. Selwyn, looking smilingly on the fair faces in the doorway.

"Me," cried Estelle, tugging along with her basket, "I want to ride in that carriage."

Estelle seemed to flutter through the air, so quickly did Mr. Selwyn accomplish her wish, and, laughing and triumphant, she looked up to Aunt Patty, who, seated in her arm-chair, beheld from her open window the departing group.

Edmund was to accompany Laura and Bessy in the family carriage, Homer and Victorine to ride together in an open barouche, and Frank to follow on horseback.

"Oh, how I wish mother and Aunt Patty were going," cried Estelle, in the prodigality of her joy; "they would have such a nice ride."

Mrs. Worth, who stood on the threshold, shook her head and smiled, though a tear trembled in her eye. The figure of Mr. Selwyn reminded her of her husband; and the re-

membrance of her own youthful, love-lighted days, rushed back upon her soul.

"Don't ride too far up the mountain," said the anxious mother; "and, Emma, don't walk too much; you must promise to rest in the cave."

"I will take excellent care of her," replied Mr. Selwyn. "Trust her with me, and she shall return in safety."

"Come back before it is dark," called out Aunt Patty; "the carriages may upset, and your necks be broken."

"Don't prophesy evil, Aunt Patty"—cried Edmund, kissing his hand to her, in token of adieu—"if you do, you will be a Cassandra, doomed to be unbelieved."

They were just about to give the signal to depart, when a man on horseback rode into the yard, and handed a letter to Homer. He read it, knit his brow, looked at Victorine, and exclaimed: "How unfortunate! I am summoned away, upon some business connected with my father's estate, which ought to have been attended to long ago. It cannot be deferred. What shall I do?"

"Go, by all means," cried Victorine, springing from the barouche, "I will stay behind."

"Thank, thank you!" exclaimed he, warmly pressing the hand which he still held; "then it is no disappointment to me. I did not wish to go, but for your sake."

"No, no, Victorine must not stay," cried every voice but Edmund's; "there is room for her here—and here—and here—we will not go without Victorine."

"No—it is better that I should stay, since Homer wishes it," said Victorine, but the flush on her cheek, and the tremor of her voice, denied the resignation of her words. Homer remained silent, and made figures on the ground with his whip. Victorine felt his selfishness more than her disappointment, and her heart rebelled against him."

"Cannot I transact your business, brother?" asked Edmund, approaching Homer. "I shall not be missed half as much, for there's a driver to our carriage, and Laura and Bessy will be protected by being in company with Mr. Selwyn and yourself."

Laura pouted, and declared she would not go without a gentleman to escort her, and loudly protested against Homer's selfishness.

"No one can transact the business but myself, as the eldest son," replied Homer, gloomily, watching the changing countenance of Victorine; "and as no one will regret my absence, it matters not to me. Victorine, I will not force your inclinations. I see you wish to go, and will probably be far happier without me."

"How unjust!" cried Victorine; "and all but Edmund echoed her words. Victorine cast an appealing glance at Mrs. Worth, for direction and decision. She did not wish it supposed that she was so much under the influence of Homer, as to fear to act contrary to his selfish will. Her high spirit revolted at this thought. Besides, she was an impassioned admirer of the beauties of nature, and had often longed for wings, that she might perch on that mountain's top—she really longed to go, and her eyes expressed this longing in their dark resplendent depths.

"Victorine might take Edmund's seat, and Edmund ride on horseback, in company with Frank, as a general escort, suggested Mrs. Worth; and the proposition was received with acclamations. Homer looked reproachfully, even indignantly at his mother, and Laura whispered to Bessy that a thunder-storm had risen, and that they had better make haste.

"You are not angry with me, Homer," said Victorine, gently laying her hand on his arm; "I would not go, indeed," added she, in a lower voice, "if it would not look so very strange for me to stay. You know it would."

"Look!" repeated he, scornfully, drawing away his arm from the soft pressure of her hand; "always thinking of what people will say. I care not what they say, or think, or feel. Why do you linger? They have brought Edmund's horse; they are waiting for you. You are at perfect liberty to do as you please. I was called away very opportunely—very opportunely, indeed."

"I agree with you entirely"—cried she, with spirit, stung to the soul, by his bitter, taunting manner. "Edmund, will you hand me to the carriage, since Homer has not the gallantry to do it—a horse on one hand, and a

maiden on the other, make you look very much like a knight."

She said this with a smile, as he led her along, but he knew that she was ill at ease, and his own cheek reddened, and his heart throbbed. The carriages rolled out of the yard; Edmund's and Frank's gay horses pranced in the rear; Estelle and Aunt Patty kept nodding to each other till a turn in the road concealed the cavalcade from view; and Homer stood with folded arms, and compressed and trembling lips, gazing after it.

At first Edmund rode silently and sadly by the side of Frank, and Victorine kept her face studiously turned from her companions; but it was impossible to ride silently and sadly long, in such glorious sunshine, such genial air, the birds singing so joyously over-head, and the landscape glowing with such life below. To ride, too, with such fine horses, whose feet kept such perfect time, on the smooth, hard, beaten road—there was joy in the motion; there was joy in the mere consciousness of existence. Then the spirits of youth are so elastic, and rebound so high after a sudden pressure; it is not strange, that every cloud dispersed, and that nothing was heard but merry voices, and nothing seen but smiling faces.

The road grew more rough and rocky as they approached the mountain, which began with a gentle acclivity, growing gradually more and more steep, till they came to a kind of green platform, where they considered it expedient to leave their carriages, and continue their journey on foot. Emma cast an anxious glance up the precipitous path, which seemed, in some places, perpendicular, and thought she might possibly welcome the cave, as a cool resting-place. Laura looked down on her delicate slippers, and thought it possible the sharp rocks might wound her feet. Estelle looked at her basket, and thought it might feel too heavy before she reached the top, but she could not be persuaded to leave it behind. The rest felt too much like young eagles, longing to try the strength of their wings, and to fly nearer the dwelling of the sun, to be daunted by the prospect of danger, difficulty, or fatigue. Bessy and Victorine, eluding the arms that would have assisted their ascent, leaped from rock to rock, and swung from bough to

bough, in all the joy of independence. Their spirits were both more buoyant from the pressure that had been weighing them down. What if their dresses did get caught by the brambles, and the sharp points of the rocks? They were not afraid of their being torn, and went laughing on. But, poor Laura! she left here and there a shred of silk, and a shred of lace; her shoes slipped down at the heel; her lace stockings burst into large holes, and she was ready to cry with vexation. Her only consolation was in clinging to Edmund's arm, whom she compelled to lift her up every steep rock, and over every narrow chasm. Frank laughed at her dishevelled appearance, and bid her admire the superior grace and activity of her companions, who paused sometimes in their airy journey, and looked back, with glowing cheeks and triumphant eyes.

"How far is it to the cave?" asked Emma, panting for breath, and pale from fatigue. "I am afraid I can go no farther."

"It is but a little distance, on the right hand," cried Edmund; "keep up your spirits a little longer. I think I hear the gurgling of the spring that gushes near."

"You have not leaned on me, as you ought," said Mr. Selwyn. "I could have carried you as easily as I could a child."

"Oh, no!" cried Emma, the colour coming back to her face. "I have taxed you too much already."

But before she had time to resist the motion, she was cradled lightly on his left arm and borne along, amidst the shouts of Frank and the merry laughter of her other companions. Edmund was right—the gurgling waters of the spring did murmur in their ears, and in a few moments they saw the mouth of the moss-covered cave—a natural inn kept by kind nature herself, for the refreshment of the weary traveller. As soon as Mr. Selwyn had released the abashed but grateful Emma, he went kindly back for little Estelle, who was too much of a heroine to complain; but whose short, hard breathing, and scarlet cheeks, showed the efforts she was making to achieve her own ascent.

"I cannot go one step farther," cried Laura, throwing herself down on a rock; "my shoes are both burst open,

my stockings torn off my feet, and my frock all ripped and dropping to pieces. What a horrible road! what briars and rocks! It is not fit for a Christian to travel. I'm sure I wish I never had thought of this old mountain."

"Those young heathen look very comfortable," said Mr. Selwyn smiling, and looking towards Victorine and Bessy, who had thrown their bonnets on the ground, and, leaning over the spring, scooped the cold water in the hollow of their white hands, and drank it with laughing eagerness. Their plain, white linen robes fell in untattered and graceful folds to the edge of the stream, and the contrast of their beautiful hair, as their heads touched each other—golden brown, and raven black, twining and curling together—could not be more strikingly displayed.

"Wait," cried Estelle. "I have a silver cup in my basket, which I brought on purpose to drink out of;" and lifting the mysterious lid, she proudly drew it forth, and claimed the office of cup-bearer to the rest. They all declared that the nectar of Jupiter was not half as refreshing as that cool draught of water from the silver cup; and that his blooming Hebe, could not be named in the same day with theirs. They admired the symmetrical arch of the cave, the green velvet of the moss, that variegated the gray of the rock; the sweet sound of the gushing spring, and wished they were hermits, that they might live there, free from the cares and troubles of the world. There was a large flat rock in the centre of the cave, which looked like a natural table, and broken pieces of rock scattered around, which answered all the purposes of chairs. Emma was delighted with the thoughts of remaining there, and produced Ossian's poems, which she had brought on purpose to read in that congenial cave; but Laura sat gloomily on a rock, her feet gathered under the skirt of her tattered dress, declaring they should never catch her on a mountain again, as long as she lived; she was afraid too, to stay in that lonely cave, afraid of robbers, snakes, and wild beasts. Mr. Selwyn offered to remain and guard the cave, but Emma would not listen to this proposition, as she expected a servant every moment, with the materials for a cold collation, which they were all to partake, when they descended, and that servant would be a sufficient protec-

tion. She and Laura would surprise them with a "table spread in the wilderness," and they wanted no witnesses to the mystery of preparation. Estelle lingered a moment, hesitating whether to go or stay, but the pride of looking through a telescope at length decided her, and committing her basket, with a long whisper, to the care of Emma, she took Mr. Selwyn's hand and recommenced her journey, in high spirits. Frank caught Bessy's arm, before she could begin her bird-like flight, and she was soon obliged to acknowledge, that she could not have dispensed with his aid, so steep and tangled did the path become. Edmund and Victorine were thus inevitably thrown together, though they had both endeavoured to avoid the contact. Victorine was at first painfully embarrased, from the remembrance of her last conversation with Homer, whose stern, melancholy countenance seemed bending above, reproaching her for her innocent enjoyment. But embarrassment was soon lost in excitement; sometimes, when she thought she had secured a firm footing on the rocky steps, and a firm hold of the slender boughs that shaded the way-side, her foot would slip, and the bough would break, and had it not been for the arm of Edmund, she would have fallen down the natural ladder they were ascending. Sometimes, they rested on a cradling branch, that curved over the path, and Edmund made a fan of the leaves, to cool her glowing cheeks. He could have done no less for a sister, and yet Victorine knew, if Homer should unexpectedly emerge from the thick woods that skirted the path, he would renew the accusation, whose remembrance still thrilled through her heart. Perhaps, too, Edmund blamed her for coming. He alone had been silent, when every other voice urged and insisted. She began to blame herself, for exposing herself to his blame, and impulsively she gave utterance to her feelings.

"I fear you think I was wrong, not to yield to Homer's wishes," said she, without lifting her eyes. "You are always so ready to sacrifice your wishes to others."

"I suspect Homer himself would have regretted, upon reflection, such an unnecessary sacrifice," replied Edmund, after a slight pause. "In his cooler moments, he is always just and generous."

"Ah! but his cooler moments"—*come so seldom*, she was about to add, when she checked the expression. There was something in Edmund's countenance, that forbade all conversation on this subject; something so foreign to its usual ingenuousness, that it repelled and disconcerted her.

"Let us go on." said she rising; "I am rested now, and Estelle is calling to us, from Mr. Selwyn's shoulder, which she has mounted in state; and Bessy and Frank have reached the top of the ladder, and are waving their handkerchiefs in triumph."

Victorine and Edmund soon joined them, and from the stepping stones on which they stood, the road rose smoother and more inclined. The ascent was comparatively easy—the crooked path becoming straight, and the rough one grassy.

"We must all take a stone in our hands, before we leave this rocky ledge," cried Edmund, "to add to the pyramid on the top of the mountain. There is a complete Stonehenge there. Every traveller is obliged to carry one, and to engrave his name as a memorial of his presence."

They all selected those which had the fairest and broadest surface, and, thus laden, pressed on with eager footsteps. They could see the summit; they had promised not to look back, so that the view might burst upon them, in one full blaze of beauty, and, more honourable than Lot's wife, they did not break their pledge.

"A race!" cried Frank; "who shall have the first sight?"

He started off, with the speed of a fiery colt, but dropping the stone, and pausing to pick it up, Edmund ran by and reached the goal, at the same moment with Mr. Selwyn, who had always been in advance. He leaped upon the pyramidical stones and waved his hat in the air, in token of victory. As he stood thus, his figure defined on the clear, blue heavens, his fine hair waving from his brow, his cheeks flushed from exercise and excitement, he might have been compared to a young Apollo, just lighted on the "heaven-kissing hill."

"I, too, have won the goal," cried Frank, giving a sudden spring, determined to surpass Edmund, and reach the

top of the mound, at one leap. But not quite accomplishing his exploit, his feet descended on a sliding stone, which, rolling from under him, brought him rolling after it to the ground, a monument of "vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself."

"Oh! Frank, are you hurt?" exclaimed several sweet voices, in a breath.

"No!" cried he, springing up as suddenly as he had fallen, and shaking the dust from his coat; "I only measured myself for your amusement."

Frank had every reason to think he had accomplished his object, by the peals of laughter which rang through the mountain air, in which he joined himself most heartily. But mirth was soon absorbed in silent, intense admiration. An overpowering sense of beauty and sublimity soberized and subdued their gay spirits. It seemed as if they were the only dwellers of creation,—so high and lone they stood; so far and still stretched the world around them; so deep and motionless appeared its repose. The glad hum of life ascended not to them; even the smoke of the valley melted in the sun-beams, before it reached their height; and the trees, though they bowed in the breeze, only presented to the eye a surface of immovable green. Every thing slept below,—but how strong and excellent was the wakeful principle of life in their bosoms! How pure and invigorating the mountain air that floated around them, free from the exhalations of earth, uncontaminated by the breath of man, and fresh as from the bowers of Eden! No sound was heard, save the wind-organs of that mountain cathedral, which stole through its rocky aisles and winding corridors, swelling as with the breath of a thousand invisible minstrels.

The mingled exclamations of "Beautiful! sublime! glorious!" succeeded the transport of mute admiration. Bessy alone continued silent. She could not express her emotions; she felt too near heaven, to use the language of earth. The divine spell of poetry was upon her, and her eyes kindled with inspiration.

"Look at Bessy!" cried Frank; "she's making poetry, I know. That's the way she looks when she's inspired."

"Well, give me pencil and paper," said she, smiling.

"and I will go to that shaded spot yonder, and if you will promise not to disturb me, I will try to do homage, in measured verse, to the lone spirit of the mountains."

"Here's pencil and paper," answered he; "but I know it is only a stratagem to be alone. Remember, if you return without the poetry, all the thunders of Olympus will reverberate round your head."

She turned away, laughing, towards the little cove that she promised should be converted into a Parnassian grove, and the lovely muse soon vanished from their sight.

"Now, please let me look through the telescope," said Estelle. "Aunt Patty will get tired, sitting so long at the window."

Mr. Selwyn took a cylinder from his pocket, and drawing it out to a surprising length, considering its original size, placed it in the direction of the homestead.

"This is only a pocket telescope," said he, "but it is a very powerful one; and if you look very steadily, perhaps you can see Aunt Patty take a pinch of snuff."

Estelle shut up one eye, and strained the other open wider than she had ever done before; but she could only see a glimmering of sunshine through a round frame. She was ashamed, however, to acknowledge a complete failure, and said she saw something that looked like Aunt Patty, but she was not quite certain. Victorine's steadier gaze beheld, indeed, the white walls they had so recently left, gleaming through the trees. She held the glass, and sought to guide Estelle's wavering glance.

"What do you see, now?"

"I see Aunt Patty's profile."

"O no: that is a chimney you are looking at. You must give up the idea of seeing her, from this distance, but see the spires of the churches; see the dome of the academy; and look all around,—how many beautiful towns are lying at our feet!"

Estelle soon became tired of shutting up one eye, and straining the other to look through so narrow a compass,

when nature, like a gorgeous map, was unrolled for her gaze. She became tired of standing, too; and, sitting down on the pile of stones, began to think how tiresome it would be to go down the steep places they had climbed with so much difficulty. She was sorry she had not stayed with Emma and Laura, in the moss-covered cave, by the side of the bubbling spring. She was sorry she had left her basket behind,—a piece of cake would taste so pleasant on the top of those old, gray stones.

"What are you doing, Frank?" inquired Edmund, approaching him, as he knelt on one knee, bending over the ground.

"I am only immortalizing your names, by engraving them on the rocks," replied he. "I am writing them impromptu. I have no occasion to retire to a grove, to compose, like Bessy."

Edmund looked over his shoulder and read, laughingly, the couplets traced on the stones with the point of his penknife.

"Here is the name of Bessy Worth,
The fairest nymph of all the earth!"

Well done for Bessy. Its a pity she hasn't a more poetical name.

'And next to her is Victorine,
A la Françoise,—our gipsy queen.'

Why, Frank, you must be inspired, as well as Bessy.

'Here is the prudent, wise Estelle,
With chickens, butter, eggs to sell.' "

"An't you ashamed to put that there, Frank, where it will last for ever?" cried Estelle, angrily; "and where everybody can see it, as long as I live?"

"Never mind, Estelle," said Edmund; "hear what he says of himself—

'The immortal name of Francis Wharton,—
The greatest poet ever thought on.' "

"You made that yourself, as you read, Edmund; but it is worthy to be written on everlasting tablets. Your own needs no epithet to speak its worth; and I dare not jest with the revered name of Selwyn. Let us go and peep at

Bessy in her Parnassian grove, and see whether the muses are gathered round her."

Bessy had wandered from the rest, not so much to write, as to think and commune with her own glowing thoughts. The remembrance of Vivian rose painfully before her, in view of such magnificent scenery,—scenery which a pencil like his, alone, could delineate. She recalled the eloquence, the passion of his language; the soul that flushed from his shifting glances; and sighed to think how dull and common-place every other being seemed in comparison. "I will not dwell on recollections like these," said she to herself, sitting down upon a rock, and spreading the paper upon her knee. "I will yield myself to the holy influences of nature, who smiles so kindly on her wayward child."

The holy influences of nature, thus wooed, breathed on the imagination of Bessy; and, with the look of a young sibyl, she began her poetical tribute to the genius of the mountain. Thus flowed the invocation:—

"Beautiful mountain! like an eastern king
Thou wear'st thy diadem of burning gold,
While the rich hues the shifting sun-beams fling
In purple royalty, are round thee roll'd.

"And thou art beautiful, when dark-brow'd night
Comes, with her silver chandelier, to throw
A starry mantle o'er thee:—Oh! how bright,
Through the soft gloom its folds of glory flow!

"Most lovely thou! when, kneeling at thy feet,
Half veil'd in mist, the blushing morn is seen;
When wakening gales thy regal presence greet,
And dewy flowers from their green couches lean.

"Beautiful mountain! image of the soul,
Rising, serene, above the clouds of time;
Girdled with light, though clouds beneath it roll,
Looking to heaven, immovable, sublime.

"The sun-beams love thee! for their brightest ray,
At morn and even, linger on thy brow,
The night-dews love thee!—nature's pearls, they lay,
Melting, in smiles, on every forest bough.

"Beautiful mountain!——"

Bessy paused, and looked upward; the warmth, the enthusiasm of genius glowed on her face. She pushed

back the tresses that clustered too thickly over her brow, and repeated, aloud, "Beautiful mountain!" A soft, low sigh seemed to come, like the echo of her words. She started, and the pencil dropped from her hand. Was it a dream of the imagination, or a figure of flesh and blood, that stood leaning against a rock, not far from the spot where she was seated? One moment she gazed in wild surprise; then, springing forward, forgot every thing in the rapture of that sudden recognition. "Vivian!"—"Bessy!"—The next moment she was in the arms of Vivian, and their hearts, lately sundered, throbbing against each other, as if they were never again to separate. Perhaps, had they met thus suddenly in a house "made with hands," the formalities of life would have kept them apart, and they would have passed each other coldly and silently. But here, in the midst of the loneliness, and grandeur, and freedom of nature, the artificial restraints of society were forgotten, and soul answered soul as God created them to do. This celestial communion, however, was of short duration. Bessy was brought back, only too soon, to the hard realities of life.

"Bessy, Bessy, have you finished your poetry?" exclaimed the laughing voice of Frank; and headed by the speaker, the whole party emerged from the shade of the rocks and shrubs, and stood rooted with astonishment at the sight of Vivian and Bessy hand in hand, still as two statues, carved out of the rock on which they leaned. Frank had broken the spell. Vivian drew away his hand with a sudden motion. The impassioned expression of his countenance changed; the fire of his eyes was extinguished in the coldness of pride.

"Have you dropped from the clouds, Vivian?" said Mr. Selwyn, who rejoiced in the re-appearance of his young friend, and whose suspicions as to the cause of his departure were now fully confirmed. "We have all reason to complain of your neglect, but if you will promise amendment for the future, we will try to get you absolution for the past."

"Have you been on the mountain, all this time, Mr. Vivian?" asked Estelle. "Oh! I know you have been living in the cave, where Emma is now."

"I have not quite turned hermit yet," answered Vivian, with an involuntary smile; "though I acknowledge I slept last night in the cave. I have been in the neighbourhood of the mountain, for several days," added he, turning to Mr. Selwyn, "where I have been detained by indisposition. I could not be resigned to leave the country, without witnessing a prospect, of which I have heard so much. I was too weary to return last night, and making myself a pillow of moss, I reclined very comfortably on my bed of rock."

"Leave the country!" exclaimed Edmund. "I thought you intended to remain, till Mr. Selwyn and myself made our second tour. I have been thinking, lately, of getting Mr. Selwyn to hasten our departure, or to allow me to go before him, as his *avant-courier*."

"You, Edmund!" cried Bessy; "you, so anxious to leave us? How unkind!" She felt that another was unkind too, but her wounded spirit refused to give utterance to the thought.

"You too, Edmund!" echoed the heart of Victorine; but she spoke not. The idea that he was about to banish himself, for Homer's sake, took possession of her mind, and she wished she had never left the sunny shores of France.

"You, Edmund!" repeated Mr. Selwyn, pressing his hand, with a warmth of which he was not aware. He read deeply the mysteries of the human heart, and he had lately watched him with intense anxiety. He saw that his prophecies were being fulfilled, and that if Edmund remained, a web of inextricable misery would be woven around him. "You are right, my boy," continued he: "and you have reminded me of my duty. If you, when manhood is only in its morn, grudge a few hours of inactivity, surely I, who have reached its meridian, should hoard my moments better. I have devoted myself to the service of my country; you to mine,—both, I trust, to the service of God. In a few years you will be established in professional life; I shall sigh for retirement and rest. I am grateful to my youthful monitor—"

The animated approbation of Mr. Selwyn's manner, the cordial pressure of his hand, told Edmund that his motives

were understood and appreciated, and the gratitude he had before felt, seemed light to that which now filled his bosom.

"Isn't it time to go back to the cave?" asked the weary, hungry Estelle. "Emma and Laura will be so tired waiting for us."

"You will come with us, Vivian," said Edmund.

"Vivian will follow with me," cried Frank. "I w' to speak with him a few moments, if he does not refuse me the honour."

Bessy turned very pale, and looked at them both in alarm.

"I have nothing to say," added Frank, "which I am not willing the whole world should hear: yet, from motives of delicacy, I should prefer, for a few moments, his private ear."

There was a serious dignity in Frank's manner, which became him well from its novelty, and even Vivian was not proof against its influence.

"I wished to speak to you," said Frank, as soon as they were alone, "because I thought a few words from me might explain a very unhappy misunderstanding. We parted in anger, and I cannot deceive you by saying I like you now; that, perhaps, I shall never be able to do. But I do not want to make you unhappy, without a cause. You look upon me as a rival; I have tried to rival you, but in vain; I thought I had a prior claim to yours, but I am mistaken. I am convinced that Bessy can never be more to me than a friend. If she is willing to be more to you, I will not stand as a stumbling-block, in the way to her happiness or yours."

There was a manly truthfulness in Frank's looks and manner, that was perfectly irresistible.

"I must, I do believe you," cried Vivian, grasping his hand with excessive emotion; "but they told me, that you had loved each other from childhood; that you had been betrothed for years."

"Nothing but a mischievous story, to sport with your credulity," cried Frank. "I think I know its source, and blush for it. I suspected, at the time, the cause of your flight, but I was selfish enough to be willing to profit by

it. I tried to take an ungenerous advantage, and have been served as I ought. But I did not then know how deeply the affections of both were engaged. Thank heaven! I have not discovered it too late."

Frank was not given to heroics, but he felt a strange choking in the throat, and fulness of the heart, when Vivian wrung his hand, then threw his arm over his shoulder, and actually wept upon his breast.

"Do not despise me for my weakness," said he; "I can bear grief, agony, and despair, and have borne it without a tear, but joy so sudden completely unmans me. Oh! you do not know what wretchedness I have suffered; what wild, desperate plans I have formed, while flying from place to place, seeking in vain to escape from myself; and now hope, joy, ambition, are all newborn within me—created again by you. You, so generous, so disinterested! What can I say or do, to prove my gratitude?"

"Nothing!" replied Frank, wiping the moisture from his eyes and brow; "it is excessively warm on this mountain. I said I never should like you, but I begin to do it already. If we are not friends before long, it will be your own fault. Come, let us follow our companions, for I know Bessy's little heart is palpitating with a thousand fears."

When the young men approached arm in arm, Frank's face, scarcely less irradiated than Vivian's, Bessy could scarcely repress the grateful thanksgiving that rose to her lips. Nothing had been explained to her, yet she knew that all was right, and that Vivian was restored to her once more.

"Will you accompany us now, Vivian?" said Mr. Selwyn, extending his hand with a cordial smile.

"If you will receive such an ungrateful vagrant among you," answered he, his face reddening, even to his temples.

"I see no one who looks discouragingly upon you, but Bessy. You had better try to propitiate her on our way to the cave, or perhaps you will be excluded from its entrance, and after fasting all night, I should think you would have no objection to share the feast, which I understand the good fairies are preparing for us."

While he was speaking, Mr. Selwyn took Estelle's willing hand, and led the way to the downward path.

"I believe I will take compassion on you, Frank," said Victorine, laughing and blushing; "since Vivian has stolen Bessy from you. I am afraid to let you go down the mountain alone, lest you should roll to the bottom. I will assist Edmund's noble efforts," added she, to herself; "he is the guardian of his brother's happiness, and I will show him how sacred I deem the trust."

Edmund lingered behind the rest, absorbed in such deep reflections, that he started with astonishment, when he found himself at the mouth of the cave. The tales of the Arabian genii seemed realized, for the rude cave was now transformed into an hospitable-looking dining-room, and the table of rock, first covered with a snowy cloth, was overspread with the comforts and luxuries of the homestead. Green boughs decked the corners, green leaves decorated the dishes, and Emma and Laura had garlands of green around their brows. The fairies, too, had been at work on Laura's dress, for the rips and tatters were mended so neatly, that one would hardly have recognised her for the dishevelled, slatternly maiden, who was left sulking there in the morning. Mr. Selwyn suspected that Emma was the presiding fairy, for she had a thimble on her finger, and her work-bag lay upon a rock. Laura scarcely refrained from screaming at the sight of Vivian, who answered her embarrassed greeting with a cold and distant bow. She saw at one glance, that there was a reconciliation between him and Bessy, and that her own duplicity must be discovered. Frank, too, looked coldly on her, and she imagined that every one watched her with a suspicious eye. She began to feel that the portion of the false one must be shame.

Bessy and Estelle were permitted to wait upon the table, as Emma and Laura had prepared it. Estelle brought the water from the spring in her silver cup, and Bessy, whose heart felt as light as the cygnet's down, flitted round the board, making the cavern radiant with her smiles.

"Why do you not eat, Victorine?" said Emma. "The lady of the grotto will be angry, if you slight her dainties."

"Oh! I've been eating of fairy-bower fruit, and drinking of fairy-well water, and I cannot partake of grosser food," replied she.

"I am afraid Victorine will make but a poor traveller," said Mr. Selwyn; "she looks pale and wearied."

"She's thinking of the thunder-storm that waits her at home," whispered Laura to Emma, "and I suspect Edmund is, too; for he looks as if he were a hundred miles off. Does your head ache, Edmund?" asked she, aloud. "I think you make as poor a traveller as Victorine."

"I am sorry if I've established such a character," replied he, "since I shall be a wayfaring man so soon."

"What do you mean, Edmund?" asked Emma. "What pilgrimage are you meditating?"

"I am going to take him with me once more," said Mr. Selwyn; "and we have concluded, on the mountain' top, that we have been resting long enough for refreshment by the well-springs of social life."

Tears gathered into Emma's eyes. "What a blank we shall feel, when you are gone," said she; "we have been forgetting that life cannot always be as happy as it is now."

"Supposing you and Bessy become our fellow-travellers," cried Mr. Selwyn; "we could have a delightful party, and so domestic; it would seem like carrying the homestead away with us. I promised Bessy, two years ago, that she should breathe the inspiring air of a classic clime. I suspect her admiration for genius and the fine arts is not diminished, unless she feels an unconquerable aversion to some of their most gifted devotees."

"Oh! I'm the worst traveller in the world," cried Emma, shrinking from the idea of crossing the broad, magnificent Atlantic. "My journey to the south almost appalled me, though I have half-promised Uncle Woodville to return and spend the winter months in his family."

"I think you must include me in your number of favoured ones," said Victorine. "I have been yearning lately to behold once more my transatlantic home."

"But Homer!" exclaimed Edmund, suddenly.

"Homer could fit up this cave for a dwelling-place," replied Victorine, colouring; "he would make the best hermit in the world."

"He would want a fair spirit to be his minister," said Mr. Selwyn; "then, I doubt not, the solitude of the mountain would be Elysium to him."

"I want to go to Europe," exclaimed Estelle. "I want to see all the fine things Edmund has told me of. Wouldn't there be room for me in the ship? Edmund says a big ship is like a little city."

"Would you leave your mother, Estelle?"

"Couldn't we take her, too?"

"And Aunt Patty?"

"Ah! poor Aunt Patty—she couldn't take such a long journey. She's lame now, and old. She would miss me too much. No! I couldn't leave her behind."

"Verily, my child, thou art a miracle of constancy," said Mr. Selwyn; "and thou shalt have thy reward. I hope some older damsels will imitate thy fidelity; and not allow their affection to be chilled or diminished by the infirmities of nature. If there is a sight which angels, and the father of angels, love, it must be that of innocent childhood, winding itself, like a blooming garland, round the faded brow and chill bosom of age."

"He means a kind rebuke to me," thought Victorine, "but he knows not half the weight that is pressing my spirits down. Oh! my soul is exceeding sorrowful, and, whichever way I turn, I see darkness, and doubt and misery. I could bear wretchedness myself, but to be the cause of wretchedness to others is more than I can endure with resignation."

The trouble of Victorine's mind was depicted on a coun tenance which mirrored, but too faithfully, every emotion of her soul. When the signal for their departure was given, she became still more agitated. She dreaded the scene that awaited her return: the jealous strife, the withering sarcasm, and the maddening accusation. She remembered the harrowing interview in the arbour, when she trembled before the might of her own roused passions, when she first felt her full powers as a woman—born to love, but to resist; capable of sacrifice, death, even martyrdom, pro-

vided they were not exacted by oppression, or claimed as a just tribute, by an arbitrary will; but ready, also, to meet sacrifices, and death, and martyrdom, sooner than submit a willing subject to an iron rule. While the rest were gathering bonnet and scarf, basket and book; running to dip their cup, for the last time, in the gush of the fountain, or pulling the moss-wreaths from the silver-gray rocks, Victorine sat absorbed in a reverie so deep, she heeded not the bustle of preparation, or the sound of departing footsteps.

"Good-by, Victorine," cried Estelle, turning back her laughing face, "you may have the fragments of the feast for supper."

"Good-by, Victorine," said Frank, "I see you are going to remain, to be the hermit's fair ministrant. We'll send him to his cell."

Victorine scarcely moved, so strong was the spell that mastered her.

"Victorine," exclaimed Edmund, in a low voice, "the shadows are beginning to lengthen."

She started quickly, and laughed at her abstraction. "I have been thinking of a name for this beautiful cave," said she; "cannot you assist me? And yet," added she, as they left the spot together, and followed the steps of their companions, "I had other and deeper subjects of meditation. I have been thinking of many, many things; and, among others, of your wish to hasten again from home. I have been so accustomed to speak impulsively, to appeal to you as a brother, and a friend, I cannot endure this chilling reserve existing between us. Let me, during this last opportunity that may ever offer, break down the wall of ice, which circumstances have built up, and which is rising higher and higher, and address you as I could have done two years ago."

"No, no, Victorine," answered he, with a vehemence of manner so unusual that she would gladly have recalled the words that excited it, "better a thousand times be as we are, cold, reserved, and apparently estranged, than attempt to renew an intimacy, which would only produce the most fatal results. Would to heaven we could be as we were two years ago!"

"Oh, how difficult it is to be understood!" cried she, holding back the tears, that were ready to gush from her eyes—"how difficult it is to know how to act in a situation like mine! I wanted to tell you—and I claim this act of truth as a right which no human being has the power to wrest from me—that if I am so unhappy as to drive you from the home where you are so dearly loved, if it is out of regard to your brother's jealous fears, you are anxious to banish yourself, I will not allow such a sacrifice. I am resolved to depart myself, that the dwelling of my benefactress may recover the peace and happiness I have been the means of destroying. I have a step-father in France, who has not forgotten the wild little savage he left behind. Your mother has refined that savage child. I will not make her wretched."

"Do you think Homer would suffer *you* to depart?" cried Edmund, pausing under the shade of an oak, that bowed over the path. "Do you think I could suffer you to do it? My mother and sisters, would they be willing to resign you? You have spoken of my unhappy brother. We all know the malady which has followed him from the cradle to manhood, and will probably pursue him to his grave. Long before he knew or loved you, I was the object of his intense jealousy—and my absence, not yours, is necessary to his tranquillity. No—Victorine, you have wrung the confession from me, and you may tremble for the consequences. It is for my sake, not yours, that I would fly; that I would build up a wall of separation between us, high as the heavens, and lasting as life. I cannot live near you any longer and be true to the vow that I've made my brother. True did I say?—as there's an avenging Providence, I feel that I've broken it already. Victorine, why did you force this from me? You had robbed me of my happiness, and now you have wrested from me all I have left, my integrity."

Recoiling from the hand that clasped his arm, he leaned heavily against the trunk of the tree, and covered his brow with his hands. Victorine felt as if she stood on the verge of a precipice, and that an abyss was yawning beneath her feet. On the one side she saw the stern, commanding Homer, threatening her with his malediction; on the other, the pale, agitated, remorseful Edmund, upbraiding her for

his despair. Previously excited by the conflicts of the day, fatigued by the walk, and faint from fasting, her brain was in such a fevered state, that her sensations bordered on frenzy. She had no power to control them, but rushing down the path, with the speed of lightning, she caught hold of Mr. Selwyn's arm, who was fortunately behind the rest, having committed Estelle to the care of Frank, and exclaimed in a strange, husky voice, "Go to Edmund!—go to Edmund!"

"Good heavens!" cried he, excessively alarmed. "What is the matter? Where is he?"

"Oh, I don't know!" cried she, putting her hand to her head—something has happened, but don't tell Homer; oh, pray, don't tell him!"

"Edmund! what 's the meaning of this?" cried Mr. Selwyn; for Edmund, raised from his paroxysm of remorse, had pursued, in terror, the flying steps of Victorine, and now stood, pale as ashes, before him.

"It means, that I am unworthy to be trusted," answered he; "I know not what I have said, but I have uttered words that never can be forgotten. Let me go, sir; I must be alone."

"Not with such a face as that," said Mr. Selwyn, in a severe tone. "Would you carry confusion and terror to yon happy group? Would you make your mother's heart bleed, by a scene of family discord? Calm yourself, impetuous boy! and let reason resume its empire. I've been dreading something like this; and yet I had such a reliance on your honour and self-control, I believed that you might be put in the very furnace of temptation, without having your garments scorched. You blush, Edmund,—you turn away your head; and, you, Victorine, you are weeping,—this excitement will subside with your tears. You must both make a strong effort to subdue your emotions, or, I shudder at what the consequence may be. You are both young, my children," added he, in a softened voice, and affectionately taking the hand of each; "and in youth the passions are strong; wrestle with them now, as Jacob did with the angel, in the strength of the Lord God, and you will come off conquerors; yield to them, and you will be miserable, degraded slaves through life."

"My imprudence has been the cause of all," said Victorine, whose excitement, as Mr. Selwyn had foretold, had melted away in tears. "Edmund is not to blame. I did not know what I was doing, when I ran to you. How weak, how childish I have been!"

"Think not of the past," said Mr. Selwyn, earnestly; "but guard yourselves for the future. See! Frank is coming back, to learn the cause of our delay. Remember, that the eyes of many are upon you. Remember, an eye more keen and watchful than all, is waiting your return. Edmund, my son, I have seen your struggles, and gloried in your self-conquest. One moment of human weakness does not tarnish the laurels you have won. I know, now, the strength of your temptations, and, if resisted henceforth, my confidence, esteem, and love shall be doubled, instead of diminished."

"What is the matter?" said Frank, fanning himself with his hat; for it was no light exercise to toil back the steep ascent. "We are all waiting on the platform. Are you ill, Victorine? The exertion has been too much for you."

"Yes!" said Mr. Selwyn, "Victorine has been overcome by fatigue. Her fairy-food has not sustained her for the extra call upon her strength, which has been made. Go, Frank, and have every thing in readiness. I will take Victorine in my landau, and Vivian can occupy her seat, you know. I am a kind of common father, and if one of my children require peculiar care, I must take them under my charge."

"How kind you are!" exclaimed Victorine, ready to fall at Mr. Selwyn's feet, in her gratitude and humility. She felt overwhelmed with shame, at the expressions of sympathy and anxiety uttered by her young friends, who soon gathered round her.

"I knew you would be sick," cried Estelle, "for you would not eat nor drink, and your eyes looked so heavy."

"How shockingly you look!" said Laura; "your eyes are so red, and your cheeks so flushed!—you must have an inflammation of the brain. You are certainly sunstruck."

Victorine rejoiced when she found herself in the car-

riage, safe from the scrutiny of Laura, and side by side with the gentle and affectionate Emma. But every motion of the carriage brought her nearer home, and unknown trials awaited her there. Just as they reached the foot of the mountain a horseman was seen galloping towards them.

"Look! there's Homer," exclaimed Estelle; "I know him by his black horse: it's all covered with foam."

"Has any thing happened at home, Homer?" asked Emma, bending anxiously forward, while Victorine drew back, shrinking from the glance, which, she saw, was still dark and lowering.

"No," replied he, turning his horse and riding by the side of the carriage; "but you were so late, I came, on my return, to meet you. I thought some accident had occurred. You must have found some extraordinary charm in the place, to have lingered so long."

"So we did," cried Estelle, eager to tell the news; "we found Mr. Vivian. He's riding in the other carriage, and that's the reason Victorine is with us. Poor Victorine! she's tired, and starved, and sick."

"Is Victorine ill?" he exclaimed, with a sudden change of voice; "why didn't you tell me of this, before?"

"I am not ill now, Homer," said Victorine, with so deep a colour mantling her cheeks, it was impossible not to believe her words; "but I'm not quite so much an eaglet as I thought I was."

"No," interrupted Estelle; "she and Edmund stayed so far behind us all; and Mr. Selwyn had to go back for them, and then Frank went, too,—we were all so frightened about them; I believe Edmund is sick, too; he looks as if he was."

"Estelle, you talk too much, entirely too much," said Mr. Selwyn, excessively vexed at her ill-timed prattle, which had all the effect which he feared, upon her brother. He knit his brow, bit his lips, and his hands visibly trembled on the bridle-rein. "I thought I should be an intruder," he muttered; "it has all been arranged marvellously well."

The high-spirited horse champed his bits, and tossed his mane, smarting from the goading spurs of his rider

With fiery eyes, dilated nostrils, and foaming mouth, he darted before the carriage, while Mr. Selwyn called upon Homer, in a commanding voice, to restrain him, at the risk of his life. The horses of Mr. Selwyn, high fed and little used, caught fire from the impetuous motions of the other, and began to follow in a full gallop.

"Hush!" cried Mr. Selwyn, putting his hand over Estelle's mouth, that opened for a violent scream; "add not to the mischief you've already done, by breaking all our necks. Keep still, and you are safe."

Taking the reins into his own hands, he so curbed their headlong speed, that Emma and Victorine felt confident that a master-hand guided their course, and forgot their fears for themselves, in anxiety for Homer. Estelle was so much mortified and wounded by Mr. Selwyn's merited rebuke, that it seemed doubtful whether she would ever speak again. It must be acknowledged that Estelle was somewhat spoiled. She was the youngest child, remarkably pretty, and remarkably small, for her age; the petted darling of the household, and the especial idol of Aunt Patty. She had been so much accustomed to make unlimited demands on her social powers, for the entertainment of the latter, she forgot that every one did not lend her as delighted an ear. If she had been aware how much injury she was doing Victorine, by the unguarded simplicity of her remarks, she would have wished herself dumb for life,—the greatest penalty which could be inflicted upon her. She only knew that she had offended Mr. Selwyn, and she made the wise resolution, of being very still and modest, till she was reinstalled in his good graces.

At length they were all safe at the homestead. Estelle's tongue burned to be the first to run in and tell her mother that Vivian was come; but she remembered that Mr. Selwyn had said that she talked entirely too much, and she suffered him to be his own herald.

Bessy could not refrain from throwing herself into her mother's arms, in the fulness of her joy. "Dear mother," whispered she, "Frank has acted nobly! It is he who has made us so happy. You must be kinder to him than you have ever been before."

Much as Mrs. Worth rejoiced at the return of Vivian, and the magnanimous behaviour of Frank, she saw, with regret, that happiness was very far removed from the bosoms of some. Homer's morning conduct was a sufficient reason for Victorine's depression; but the quickness of maternal love perceived that Edmund had a heaviness on his heart, deeper than had ever weighed there before. Mr. Selwyn, too, had an anxious and troubled look; and his eye frequently rested on Edmund with an intensity of expression that was inexplicable to her. Homer did not appear; his horse stood, panting, in the yard; but whither the master had gone, to brood in sullen secrecy, over his own dark thoughts, no one knew or asked. The erratic movements of the misanthropist were generally suffered to pass unnoticed.

"Why don't you tell me about all the wonders you have seen, Estelle?" asked Mrs. Worth, grieved to see that even Estelle looked sad.

"Mr. Selwyn thinks that I,—I—talk too—much," stammered she, blushing, and her eyes filling with tears.

"And because I said that, perhaps a little too hastily, I hope my little friend is not going to be dumb all the rest of her life," said Mr. Selwyn, drawing her towards him with a smile of reconciliation.

"I am afraid you troubled Mr. Selwyn very much, or said something very improper," said her mother, gravely.

"I only said that Victorine and Edmund stayed away off, behind us; and that Mr. Selwyn had to go back for them, and Frank after him:—and then Mr. Selwyn got angry, and Homer's horse began to run, and our horses began to gallop, and—and——" Estelle paused, conscious then, in her vindication, she was yielding to her besetting sin.

A pang such as only a mother feels, when she foresees the certain misery of her children, pierced the heart of Mrs. Worth; she looked at Edmund, whose changing countenance confirmed her apprehensions; she looked at Victorine, and for the first time the dread that she had been nurturing in her bosom, a false being unworthy of so sacred a dwelling-place, came shudderingly over her.

Frank, who had, as Bessy said, acted nobly throughout the day, regardless of himself, and acutely alive to the feelings of others, began with his wonted hilarity to talk of their adventures, "their hair-breadth escapes, and imminent deadly perils," not forgetting his own downfal.

"Poor Victorine," added he, "is too much of a fine lady to keep up with the wild flights of Bessy and Estelle. We were all shamefully forgetful of her, and left her in the lurch, till Edmund, who is ever thoughtful for the comfort of others, took compassion on her, as she had done on me, when Bessy left me, for *that* Vivian"——emphasizing with much vehemence on the name of his rival. "She fell sick, and Mr. Selwyn went to the rescue. Now, had it not been for my sad downfal, and Victorine's fine lady airs, we should have had a glorious day; a day to be remembered in the annals of history; a day, which I am sure I shall ever remember with gratitude, for I trust I have gained a life-long friend, and I know there's one happy heart will bless me in her prayers to-night."

"Not only to-night, but for ever," ejaculated Bessy, giving him a glance from her heavenly blue eyes, that conveyed a thousand blessings.

Vivian's fine countenance became luminous with feeling. "You have indeed gained a friend," he cried; "who will ever associate you with the sweetest and brightest moments of his existence."

Frank's careless, natural narration, relieved Mrs. Worth of her worst fears, and her conscience upbraided her, for her transient injustice to Victorine. The current of her feelings was changed, and as it flowed more calmly on, the lovely, love-lighted face of Bessy was mirrored on the tide.

Estelle, on whose weary eyes, the dews of slumber were falling fast, was warned by her mother to retire. The affectionate child lingered on the threshold for a kind word from Mr. Selwyn, whose attention at that moment was occupied by another. Waiting in vain to catch his eye, she stole behind his chair, and whispered, "Pray, forgive me for talking too much. I'll try not to do so any more."

Mr. Selwyn caught her in his arms, and imprinted a

kiss on her fair round cheek. "You must forgive me, too, my darling Estelle, for speaking so harshly, and putting my hand so roughly on those sweet lips. But the happiness and the lives of many were at stake, and I was obliged to be stern, to save them. One scream, and Aunt Patty might now be mourning over her lost darling, and her unfinished counterpane."

Estelle smiled through her tears, and went to bed with a lightened heart. Mr. Selwyn sought that evening an interview with Mrs. Worth. That day seemed destined to be marked in the annals of the family history. Mr. Selwyn, whose manners were remarkable for their elegant self-possession, was on this occasion visibly embarrassed, and Mrs. Worth waited in some trepidation for the communication he was about to make.

"I wished to speak with you, madam," said he, after making some general remarks, "upon our contemplated tour. It is Edmund's desire to go immediately, and whatever regret you may feel, at parting with him so soon, I think your penetration must perceive the wisdom of his resolution. Should he remain longer here, I fear that his happiness must be the inevitable sacrifice."

"I dreaded as much," replied Mrs. Worth. "I see but too well he is unhappy, and that he does not suffer alone. But must he for ever be an exile from his home? Must he be made a victim to the dark passions of others? He, who seemed born to make the sunshine of my life! And yet, I tremble while he remains. If I should oppose his going, I may bring a weight of sorrow on my soul, that would crush it to the dust."

She bowed her face upon her hands, and a silent prayer ascended to Heaven, for fortitude to endure, and strength to sustain.

"Do not shadow out too sad a futurity," said Mr. Selwyn; "I hope every thing from this speedy separation. Edmund is so young, and such a well-spring of joy has, till now, been gushing in his soul. I cannot think of his green hopes being withered, never to bloom again. Homer, if once united to Victorine, may, perhaps, find his troubled spirit lulled to rest on the bosom of wedded love."

"Homer's spirit will never find rest in this world," said the mother. "He may have here and there a gleam of happiness, but it will be like a sun-ray on the roaring billows. No—there is no such thing as rest, for such a spirit as Homer's. Yet why should I limit the power of the Almighty? There is a peace which passeth all understanding, which may yet dawn upon his soul. Oh! that he might repose on the bosom of heavenly love!"

"And now," said Mr. Selwyn, "will you permit me to speak, one moment, of my own hopes and wishes: I would not be selfish, yet I have identified my happiness so closely with yours, and your interesting family, I cannot separate it if I would. No man living knows how to attach a higher value to the blessings of domestic life. I once had an angel wife, who made this world a paradise to me. She was taken from me, and no sweet child was left, to 'hang upon my neck, and look resembling her.' My home was a desert—I exchanged it for a public life, and sought in the exercise of exalted duties, and in the bustle of stirring events, oblivion for unutterable wo Accident threw in my way the son of my early friend; and my widowed, childless heart, yearned to adopt him as my own. I became domesticated, as it were, in the bosom of your lovely family, and all the sympathies of life have been re-awakened in my bosom." He paused, and Mrs. Worth trembled for the revelation which he was about to make. She honoured and esteemed him as the friend of her husband. She loved him, as the friend and benefactor of her children, but her heart was buried in the grave of her first and only love, and she felt, if ever woman did, the truth of these thrilling words:

> "Oh! what is any living love,
> To that which cannot quit the dead?"

Mr. Selwyn rose, and walked several times across the room, without speaking—then stopped and laid his hand on the chair, which supported Mrs. Worth.

"You must have anticipated," said he, in an agitated voice, "the avowal I am about to make. The manifestations of true affection cannot often elude the penetration of

others. I fear you may think my hopes presumptuous, nay, even preposterous; and yet, upon your decision, depends the happiness of my life."

Poor Mrs. Worth! she sat with her eyes bent upon the floor, a colour on her cheek, bright as the first rose of youth. This was such a sudden and unexpected trial! To give pain to the noble and generous friend of her children, perhaps deprive them of their future protector, of one who might watch over them, if she, perchance, were laid low in the dust. Yet the thought of a second marriage seemed, to her constant heart, as great a sacrilege as if her husband still walked hand in hand with her, living, loving, and supporting.

"I see, and do not wonder at your hesitation," said he; "she is so young, and you may may think that she regards me with only filial reverence. But Emma has the thoughtfulness and serenity of maturer years, blended with the simplicity and tenderness of youth. Prevented, from delicacy of health, from sharing the usual amusements of her age, she has acquired a sobriety of feeling, and a kind of matronly grace of manner, which make me forget the disparity of age. If I have your permission to ask her to be my wife, I am willing to hazard a rejection from her."

Mrs. Worth raised her eyes, with a sensation of indescribable relief. Grateful, beyond measure, that she had not committed herself, by uttering any words expressive of her misunderstanding of his proposal, astonished at the conquest of her youthful daughter, her unpretending, heaven-devoted Emma; and flattered by such a compliment from so excellent and distinguished a man, she found it difficult to collect her thoughts, so as to give him a clear and definite answer.

"She is so young," was her first remark.

"Yes! but I am old enough to guard her youth."

"Her constitution is so frail!"

"I will cherish her, like a tender plant in my bosom. My strength shall be the stay of her weakness. I will be father and husband in one."

"You have indeed proved a father to all my children, and if by giving you one, I can partly cancel my debt of gratitude, I ought to rejoice in the opportunity. But

would you still keep your station in public life? Would you think of taking her to foreign climes?"

"I see you think I am asking too much of your friendship. But the sea-born breezes will bear strength upon their wings, and finish the work of restoration commenced in a southern land. If you could send her across the ocean, under the charge of a good physician, you ought to do it. I will be the best physician in the world; though she looks too well now to remain on the invalid list. By-and-by, I will come and settle down in some beautiful country-seat, perhaps near your own, where we may enjoy

> "An elegant sufficiency, content,
> Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
> Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven."

Mrs. Worth remembered how often her husband had applied this beautiful picture of domestic happiness to their own wedded life, and many a proof of *recollected love* moistened her eyes with the dew of memory.

"Edmund," continued he, "shall not suffer from my present intentions. I have an ample fortune, which he still shall share. Vivian, too, requires my aiding hand. I will give him a broad stepping-stone to stand upon, and then his genius will build others, step above step, till he reaches a height of fame and fortune, equal to his most lofty aspirations. Believe me, madam, a glorious destiny awaits that young man. Bessy is the child of genius herself, and their two souls meet and blend into one, as naturally as two sun-rays meet together as they unite. Oh! madam, I trust your children will all be happy yet. My friend will look down from heaven, and rejoice over the loved ones he has left on earth."

"I have no words to express my gratitude for your all-embracing kindness," cried Mrs. Worth; "and if the love of my young and unobtrusive Emma can in any way repay a mother's debt, and if her heart answers to the wishes of yours, take her, with the dowry of my blessings and my prayers."

Did Emma's heart answer to Mr. Selwyn's? Had she been warned by premonitory symptoms of the approaching

crisis? She had been pleased and honoured by his extreme kindness and attention, but she attributed it to the interest he felt in the daughter of his friend. Her modesty and simplicity, and his superior age, talents and fortune, had prevented her from dreaming of the possibility of such a union. The idea of any one's loving her, when Bessy was near, never entered her imagination. She might excite sympathy, kindness, and esteem; but love was Bessy's inalienable right. She, herself, was destined to be an old maid; and she had resolved to make that often aspersed name so lovely from the graces of the heart and mind, that no one should shrink from wearing it. With such an humble estimate of herself, it is no wonder that Emma was overwhelmed with astonishment.

Had the mountain, which they had just ascended, come down, and knelt at her feet, she could not have experienced more amazement. But when the stunning effects of surprise were over, and she could realize that she was sought as a wife, by the man whom she revered as the first of human beings, her gratitude was as deep as her humility. To be chosen as the companion of his intellectual and ennobling pursuits, the object of his chief tenderness and care, to have his arm of strength, and soul of honour, as a constant guard and support; to kneel at his side in prayer, and commune with him of the mysteries of holiness; to walk hand in hand with him through life, and partake with him of a blissful eternity; surely, this was happiness enough for her meek and unambitious spirit. It was not long before she came to the conclusion, that while she cherished for him all the affection of a daughter, she could learn to love him with all the tenderness of a wife.

When those sweet, virgin sisters pressed their nightly couch, their hearts were too full for sleep. What a change in their life-prospects since the morning light! and what a contrast in their own! Bessy's love partook of the warmth, the enthusiasm and poetry of her nature. Her imagination beautified and glorified her love. Her heart had not waited to know, whether Vivian first loved her, but she had welcomed him, as she had once told her mother, as one known and loved in a remembered world; she was sure she would have chosen him from the assembled universe, as her fellow

soul; and had not circumstances thrown them together, she would have gone through life a lonely pilgrim, sighing for the one being created for her. But now that being was found. They had met—they had loved—they were to be united for ever. Bessy was too happy to sleep. Her cheeks' glowing rose warmed the snows of her pillow, and her heart throbbed audibly beneath the folds of her white night-robe.

While the two lovely sisters thus lay cheek to cheek, and heart to heart, in their vestal couch, while the holy stars looked silently and lovingly on them, through their parted curtains, and ministering angels hovered with unseen pinions round their bed, there was another, who kept lonely vigils, whose sighs stole on the silence of the midnight hour, and whose pillow was saturated with tears. Victorine could not sleep. The midnight hour found her bathed in tears; the morning light flashed on her wakeful eyes and fevered brow. She arose early, and endeavoured to efface, with copious ablutions, the traces of her tears.

"I will bathe my soul in music," said she, "and see if I can find balm in the heavenly ablution." She sought the piano, and began a morning hymn of praise, which Mrs. Worth loved to hear. "His mother's wakening ear will hear, and, perhaps, bless the sounds."

Did she mean Homer, or Edmund's mother? Sweet and solemn her voice rose; and sad, too, though it was a hymn of adoration and praise—

> "Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear
> My voice ascending high,—
> To thee will I address my prayer,
> To thee lift up mine eye."

"Victorine!" uttered a deep-toned voice. It was the voice of Homer—and she knew that a scene of passion and strife awaited her.

"Is your soul tuned to harmony this morning, Homer?" asked she, looking up with a smile. It was a forced one, and vanished when her eye met his.

"You meet me in mockery, Victorine," said he, "but there is not one chord in my spirit that can respond to music or mirth. I should think your conduct of yester-

day might produce by this time some serious reflections."

"What conduct? If you mean my going, unaccompanied by yourself, reflection only confirms me in the propriety of the step. You do not, cannot blame me now, Homer, for doing what every other person in the world would have done in my situation. What any other person but yourself would have wished me to have done. You do blame me still. I have done you more than justice. I thought you selfish from passion. I find you so from principle."

"Ever ready to justify yourself, Victorine. Ever ready to throw censure on me. I was not about to allude, at this moment, to the circumstance of your choosing a party of pleasure, in preference to showing, by a trifling sacrifice, your regard to my happiness. I could have forgiven that; I did, so far as to ride forth to meet you, weary as I was, resolved to greet you in the spirit of reconciliation. But you drew coldly back as I approached, as if something evil were crossing your path. No wonder, you drew back in conscious guilt, when you knew how you had spent the hours since we parted. How glaring must have been your conduct, since even childhood made it a matter of animadversion. What did your innocent sister say? Good heavens! how calmly I am speaking, when her every word is blistered on my brain!"

"I'm weary—oh! so weary of this strife"—cried Victorine, clasping her hands passionately together, "that I am tempted to make a solemn vow, that this shall be the last time we shall ever meet. Yet once again, in pity to your misery, I will explain those blistering words. Knowing your unhappy suspicions, Edmund and myself mutually avoided each other. In coming down the mountain, I even solicited the arm of Frank, because my heart told me you would thank me for the choice. Before we left the cave, I became so absorbed in sad meditations, caused alone by you, that I knew not when my companions left me. Edmund was the last, and because he was not cruel enough to suffer me to come down those rough rocks unsupported and alone, you upbraid me, as a criminal, guilty of some ignominious deed. O Homer! you are not worthy of such a noble, gene-

rous brother. You do not know the heart you believe capable of such injury to you."

"Every word you have uttered" continued he, with increasing vehemence, "has only added tenfold weight to my suspicions. I did not ask for an explanation. I knew there was none to be given. Do not add duplicity to your already broken faith. Do not go on coolly and deliberately playing with my credulity, and mocking me with protestations of regard. The torture inflicted in ancient days, of suffering water to fall, drop by drop, till it perforated the living brain, and bared the secret place of thought, could not have been compared to this. Victorine, why do you attempt to deceive me in this manner? You do not love me; you never have loved me."

"I have loved you, Homer," cried she, with more sorrow than anger in her voice and manner. "I have loved you as you never will be loved again. Hear me calmly, for one moment, and then I am willing to be silent for ever. When I first discovered the influence I had gained over your heart, my pride exulted in the thought, that the eye, that looked so coldly and darkly on all the world, softened at the beams of mine; that the bosom, shut to every sweet affection, opened involuntarily to embrace my image. Then tenderer feelings dawned, and my eyes, which had hitherto glanced sportively on all around, learned to soften at the beams of *yours*. My heart unfolded to receive *your* image, and enshrine it, as a sacred trust. The gloom of your character, at which I once flung the random shafts of ridicule, assumed a grandeur in my sight, since I found it resulted from a depth of feeling, which no common mind could fathom. Yes, Homer," continued Victorine, with indescribable grace and dignity, her language rising into that metaphorical strain, in which strong passion unconsciously indulges, "I looked upon you as one of those ruins, round which genius and feeling love to linger, where the moonlight shines lovelier from the very darkness of the shadows, and the ivy blooms brighter from the dampness of its broken walls. But since I find you capable of the most degrading suspicions, and cruel injustice; since I see you persisting in a course of conduct as debasing to yourself as it is harrowing to me, destroying the peace of your brother, and

wearing out my own existence with your causeless, unnatural jealousy, setting aside manliness, and reason, and truth; I tell thee, Homer, and I tell thee calmly—I would as soon take the lightning's chain, and bind it round my breast, for warmth, as trust for happiness in such love as you can offer me."

"Then you reject me for ever!" cried he, his quivering lips turning as pale as clay.

At this moment, which might be the crisis of his fate, the door was opened, and Edmund stood before them. He was not aware of the interview, on which he was intruding, and, as soon as he discovered in whose presence he was, he turned to leave the apartment.

"Stay," cried Homer, his blood boiling in his veins from the fire of his passion; "stay, brother that was, traitor that is. The time is come when we must understand each other. Where is the vow you made before the God of heaven, that you would never be my rival, in fame, fortune, or love? Fame—I care not for its breath. Fortune—you have already secured; and love—all that I treasured, all that I lived for, you have stolen from me; basely, insidiously, like the midnight robber, who wraps himself in darkness, as a thick veil. Look me in the face, if you dare, and tell me that your vow is not broken."

"Broken in spirit, but not in deed," cried Edmund, recoiling from the frenzied glance of Homer. "I told you that I was human, that I had strong passions, and that it was only in the strength of God, that I wrestled with them. I have never attempted to rival you. Victorine knows that I have not. I have treated her as the stranger within our gates, not the friend of my childhood. I have done what I can do no more. I cannot stay. The world henceforth shall be my home. I leave every thing to you—mother, sisters, Victorine, and home. I am willing my very name should be blotted from remembrance, provided such oblivion could purchase tranquillity for you."

"No, no, Edmund," cried Victorine, "leave me not to him. My decision is made. I shall return to my native clime, and bury in the walls of a convent every youthful hope. Homer, if you had fifty thousand brothers, and

banished them all for my sake, it would be in vain; I never could be your wife."

Edmund gazed upon Victorine, as slowly and sadly, but firmly, she uttered these emphatic words. They were not the breathings of passion, but the expression of an unalterable will. Her eyes, in conclusion, were lifted towards heaven; her hands were clasped tightly over her breast. The idea that she was free, that, though lost to him, he was not doomed to love her as the wife of his brother, filled him with a momentary joy, too strong to be repressed. The emotions which he had so long struggled to subdue, rushed, for one instant, unchecked through his veins, burned on his cheek, and flashed from his eyes. Homer marked this sudden bursting of light and flame, and he marked, too, a sudden, simultaneous illumination of Victorine's late pale and passionless face. A blindness came over his eyes; a cold, clammy sweat covered his brow. He felt as if he had burning coals eating into his naked heart; as if all life and warmth had concentrated in that one spot, in a consuming blaze, and that Edmund had kindled it from the fires of hell.

"If never mine, not Edmund's!" exclaimed he, rushing towards Edmund, with the fury of a madman. Victorine threw herself on his arm, with a cry so wild and piercing, that it penetrated to the remotest chamber of the homestead, but it was too late. The blow descended, and Edmund, thrown violently against the marble corner of the mantelpiece, lay prostrate beneath his brother's fratricidal hand.

What a scene met the gaze of those who, roused by that wild cry of agony, ran in terror to the spot! Stretched on the floor, still and white as a corpse, was the lifeless body of Edmund, his head resting on the marble slabs of the hearth, which were splashed with the blood-drops that gushed from his temples. And reclining over him, as white and almost as lifeless, lay Victorine, her long hair sweeping over his breast, and dabbling in his blood, and her arms clasping him in a stiffening fold. Standing over this death-like pair, still, dark, and terrible, as Cain over the body of his martyred brother, still as if transformed to

stone by some avenging power, towered the stately form of Homer.

It were a vain attempt to describe the anguish and horror that filled the household. Sorrow had once before visited that mansion, a sudden, fearful messenger, but it was a commissioned angel from on high, and the most rebellious will soon learn to bow to the mandate of God. But man had wrought this deed—a son—a brother. Strange, that that fond mother's heart did not break at once! Strange, that those loving, gentle sisters, could gaze on such a sight and live! But it is astonishing what a weight of wo the human heart can bear, without being crushed. The first distinct sounds which were heard, amidst shrieks and incoherent cries, were uttered by Mr. Selwyn; who, alone, retained sufficient self-possession to think, and to act. "Bathe her temples, give her water and air," cried he, lifting Victorine from the bosom of Edmund, and bearing her to a sofa; then without waiting to see who obeyed his command, he knelt down by his adopted son, raised his bleeding head on his arm, and laid his hand beneath the folds of his vest. "Great God!" he ejaculated, "there is life; a faint pulsation in his heart. Haste for the physician—quick—bring bandages—lint—any thing to stop this blood from flowing. Water—for God's sake give me water, or he dies."

The moment Mr. Selwyn exclaimed, "Great God! there is life;" Homer burst into a loud, convulsive laugh, then fell back into the arms of Frank and Vivian, who both sprang forward to receive him. They bore him from the apartment, but even after the door was closed, the echo of that same convulsive laugh was heard again and again, more terrible a thousand times than the wailings of grief.

Edmund indeed lived, but the violence of the blow and fall had produced a concussion of the brain, and his life was suspended on so slender a hope, it was scarcely felt in the iron grasp of despair, which had hold of their hearts.

The sun went down that night on a house of grief, but all was still as death, save the chamber where Homer lay, tossing in delirious agony, now tearing the bandages from his arms, where the veins had been opened, to give vent

to the hot, feverish blood, and now calling for water to quench the fire in his heart and his brain. Victorine had fallen from one fainting fit into another, till, at length, she sunk into a stupor so deep it might have been taken for the slumber of the grave. The sisters, prohibited the chamber of their brothers, sat by the couch of Victorine, holding her pallid hands and bathing them with their tears. Sometimes, the sound of a softly opening door, a cautious tread on the stairs, made their pulses stop and their blood curdle. It might be the messenger of death approaching, and they feared to look into each others faces. Sometimes, too, the ravings of Homer came like the fitful moanings of an autumn wind, on the hush of the midnight hour. Only the night before, they had lain in each other's arms, too full of blissful hopes to slumber, and now the same stars that smiled so benignantly upon them, seemed to look down with pale, mournful lustre, on their sad vigils.

All night the mother leaned over the bed of Edmund, watching his death-white face, and counting the beatings of his feeble pulse. Good Doctor Leyton, the old family physician, whom they all loved next to their minister, never left them, but went from room to room, administering comfort, if not relief. Mr. Selwyn's principal station was by the side of Homer, but he often stole in to gaze on the marble features of Edmund, and to whisper in the mother's ear tidings of the unhappy Homer. And where are those venerable forms, seated side by side, in the gloom of that silent, shaded room? How came they there, those old, trembling, silver-haired ones, to share the night-watch which they cannot relieve? How awful is their appearance there, in the midst of the stillness and grief! A link between the past and the present, the living and the dead!

The aged dwellers of the little cottage had tottered over as soon as the tidings had reached their ears, and they would not be constrained to depart until morning; of all the family of their benefactress, none was so beloved as Edmund, and the old ladies wept, and prayed God that he might live, even if He should require their lives in his stead. Softly the octogenarian murmured the language of

Scripture, with which her memory was stored, and it stole on the ear, like the voice of prophecy, so solemn and slow were the accents. It was well poor old Aunt Patty could not leave her apartment, for she, too, would have claimed a place by the pillow of Edmund, and age has an authority which was never disputed in the family of Mrs. Worth. Estelle was forbidden to quit her, and the child found consolation in pouring out her sorrows in Aunt Patty's sympathizing ear.

Day passed after day, and still the muffled knocker, and the darkened window, and the mournful countenances, showed that the fear of death hung over the house. It was true, Victorine had risen, and was seen hovering like a pale ghost round the bed of Edmund, but Edmund still lay with closed eyes and speechless lips; and Homer, though his ravings had subsided, languished under a burning fever, brought on by the fierceness of passion.

The third night, as the mother hung over her second-born, the long sealed lids, slowly unclosed, and the soul awakened from its trance, looked feebly forth from the dim eyes. She did not speak, but laid her hand gently on his brow. A dewy moisture met her touch, and the pale lips parted with a perceptible motion. Again the eyes closed, and the faint, regular breathings of slumber stole on her ear. On her knees she watched that slumber, and Victorine knelt at her side, for they knew that sleep was the crisis of his fate; it would either bear him softly over the billows of death, or bring healing on its downy wings.

"Mother," murmured a faint voice; and Mrs. Worth knew that God had given her son back to her arms. "Victorine." The mother and the Victorine thus faintly addressed, attempted not to answer, but, on their knees as they were, they fell on each other's neck, and wept, and sobbed, as if Edmund had just breathed his last. "My brother!" again sighed Edmund; "My unhappy brother!"

"He lives, my son," said Mrs. Worth, laying her hand on Edmund's pallid lips; "but speak not, move not. O my God, I thank thee!"

She felt the faint pressure of those pallid lips on her hand, and his eyes, raised to heaven, seemed to echo the grateful ejaculation, "O my God, I thank thee!"

And now Edmund's only danger was, in being killed by too much kindness by his tender nurses. But had they forsaken Homer? Did no mother or sister tend his feverish couch, and minister to his disease? Ah! when did a mother ever forget her first-born? At least such a mother as Homer's? When did passion ever estrange, or crime alienate the mother from her son, the child of her prayers, her hopes, and her tears? During his wild paroxysms, he would allow no one to be near him, but Mr. Selwyn, Frank, and Vivian, who kept watch by him day and night, and it often required their united strength to master him in his struggles; but when the fever left him, he was weak as an infant, and as easily subdued. Though his delirious madness was over, his mind still wandered, and the doctor began to fear a permanent alienation of the intellect, though he did not express his apprehensions.

Once, as his mother sat by him, she noticed a sudden change in his countenance. He gazed long and mournfully on her, and then said in a low voice—"Have you not cursed me?"

"Curse my son?" she cried. "O Homer! I have wept over you, and prayed over you, when you knew me not; and now, Homer—yes, even now, my first-born, a mother's blessing may be yours, if you will not cast it from you. Your brother lives, and forgives you, as freely as he hopes to be forgiven by his God."

"My brother forgives me!" repeated he, in indescribable emotion,—"and you, have you one blessing left for me—even for me—O my mother!—me, the second Cain!"

He drew the covering over his face, and the bed shook with the throes of his agony. Gently, and soothingly, she bent over, and whispered in his ear words of heavenly consolation. She told him of the prodigal, who, returning in shame and remorse to his father's mansion, was welcomed with the embraces of love; of the abounding joy in heaven, over the repenting sinner; of the promise given to the broken and contrite heart, that the high and Holy One, which inhabiteth eternity, should descend and make his dwelling there. Holy were the lessons taught on that bed of sickness. The stubborn glebe of the sinner's heart was broken by the ploughshare of the Almighty, and watered

by penitential showers; it might yet yield a harvest of golden fruit.

At length the brothers met once more. Homer, weak and languid, reclined upon a sofa, supported by the arm of his mother. Edmund, whose recovery had been more rapid, came in, leaning on Mr. Selwyn, who fain would have retarded the interview. But Edmund yearned to pour the balm of forgiveness into the goaded bosom of Homer, and the first effort of returning strength led him to his side. Homer's head was pillowed on his mother's shoulder. His raven hair hung damp and thick over his pale brow, shading his sunken eyes. His features were in deep repose: the workings of passion having settled down into an expression of profound melancholy. But though the strife seemed over, and the battle won, the scars of a wounded spirit were imprinted on his face. The lightning leaves its scathing mark; fire, flood, and storm, their blasting traces; but the lightning and storm of passion leave deeper and more blasting traces on the soul. Edmund, pale and agitated, approached his brother, and the next moment they were weeping in each other's arms, while the arms of a mother enfolded them both.

Mr. Selwyn withdrew. He felt it was a scene which should be sacred from all intrusion; that even the eye of friendship should not invade its hallowed bounds.

"How much you have suffered, my brother!" exclaimed Edmund, gazing with anguish on Homer's altered features; "but God has been merciful to us both. Let us commence anew a life of gratitude and love."

"If I could die this moment," cried Homer, "I should be happy—happy in the consciousness of your forgiveness, and hoping in the mercy of God. But I dread to return to the world. I dread the resurrection of my bosom enemy."

"No, it will never rise again," said Edmund; "I renounce the fatal passion which has destroyed our peace. Had I been true in spirit to the vow I made, this evil never had befallen us. We have both been tempted, and both have sinned."

"Hear me, Edmund," cried Homer, raising his head, and lifting his joined hands to heaven, "while I declare, as in the presence of omnipotent Truth, that the thought of

Victorine shall never again come betwixt thee and me. She has renounced me, and I here resign all claim upon her affections or her faith. I absolve you from a promise made to a madman. As a rational being I have no right to exact it. Be happy with each other, and let no remembrance of me darken your felicity. If I live I will gather up the energies of my soul, and labour henceforth for immortality. No, not for immortality, but eternity. But something tells me here," added he, pressing his hand heavily on his breast, "that I am destined to an early grave. The flame of life has been burning too intensely to last. My youth is consumed, like the grass of the field, when the breath of fire passeth over it. Weep not, my mother, my long-suffering, blessed mother. The sleep of the grave will be sweet to me. No storm of passion will disturb that long repose. No scorching jealousy be felt in that cold bed. All will be peace there, my brother."

Edmund pressed his hand, incapable of utterance. The love he felt for Victorine seemed a faint emotion compared to what he experienced, at this moment, for Homer. He would willingly purchase his life at the sacrifice of his own. He would never erect his happiness on the ruins of his brother's. He would emulate his generosity.

The brothers moved again in the family circle; but Homer was the shadow of his former self. His lofty figure drooped; the lustre of his lamp-bright eyes waxed dim. The haughty spirit, which once sat enthroned in those brilliant eyes, was become gentle as a weaned child, and could be led by a silken thread. His mother watched him, with heart-breaking tenderness. Of all her children, he had called forth the greatest intensity of feeling. She had loved him with fear and trembling. The fear that he would forfeit the affection of all others, only bound him closer to her heart. Whatever he had been to the rest of the world, he had always been gentle and affectionate to her. And now, when he was gentle and affectionate to all, and household love followed his steps, and hung upon his looks with ever-increasing devotion, when the lost link in the family chain was restored in golden lustre, must the chain be broken by death? Must the prodigal, so lately received into the bosom of an earthly home, be called so soon to his Father's

mansions in the skies? "Even so, Father," replied the Christian parent—"if it seemeth good in thy sight. The cup which thou givest me, shall I not drain it, even to the bitterest dregs of sorrow! One loved one is gone before me—another is treading the shadowy path. The way through the dark valley is beaten, and when I travel through it, it will be sweet to know, that I am treading in the steps of my husband and my son."

As her fears strengthened, so did the hopes of others. They saw his eye become brighter, and a bright flush on his cheek came and went, like a herald of returning health. "He is better," they would say, "oh! how much better. He will soon be well, and we shall be happy together once more."

Edmund and Victorine never talked of happiness. The thought could not be associated with Homer, and consequently was rejected by them.

One evening Mrs. Worth was summoned to the dying bed of old Lady Graves, who had never been well since the night she sat by Edmund, believing the angel of death had come to bear him away. The shock was too much for her aged frame, and she was about to be gathered to her fathers. She wanted to see the children of her benefactress—"her princely boy"—most of all, he whose danger had hastened her to the tomb.

"I am going," said the aged Christian, holding out her cold, trembling hand, "I am going the way of all the earth. My soul rejoices to lay down the burden of nearly a hundred years. The Lord has been exceedingly gracious unto me," continued she, gazing dimly up in the fair, sad faces that bent over the couch, "and sent you all to comfort the poor and the needy, to uphold the aged and infirm, to be lamps to my feet, and guides to my path. Come nearer, and let me lay my hand in blessing on you, before I go hence and am no more seen for ever." Solemnly the dying saint laid her palsied hand on each head bowed in reverence before her. It lingered a moment on Bessy's, and her fingers slowly threaded the labyrinth of her golden tresses. "Are these the strings of the golden harp of the cherubims?" she murmured, her senses wandering; "they are all stirring with music. I stand upon a sea of glass,

and I shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints!"

Her eyes closed, and she lay so still they thought her spirit had passed, when, suddenly opening them, she spoke with a stronger voice, and a spark gleamed in her eyes, from life's decaying embers.

"I have had a dream," she cried, gazing fixedly at Mrs. Worth. "The angel of the Lord came down to me, and told me he had a message for you. I am going to have company in the grave to-night. The aged and the young shall lie side by side, and rise together in the resurrection morn. The Master will come, and knock at your door. The young man will rise at the call. Keep him not back, for the Master is waiting. He's waiting for him and for me."

As Mrs. Worth and her children listened to the prophetic voice which pronounced the doom of death on their house, a cold chill ran through their veins. It was true, her mind had been dwelling lately on the dark scenes which had transpired at the homestead, and it was natural their remembrance should blend with her dying dreams.

Bessy, whose early faith in dreams had left a shade of superstition on her imagination, clung pale and tearful to the arm of Edmund, and entreated him to return. And Mrs. Worth impulsively sought to release her hand from the cold fingers that closed round it. But reason soon mastered impulse, and she would not forsake the dying for the terrors of a feverish dream.

"What will become of my poor daughter," said the old lady, the throb of nature wakening in her heart—"alone—alone—all alone in the world. Poor Eunice!—but the Lord will take care of her. I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor their seed begging their bread."

"I will take care of her," said Mrs. Worth. "I will take her home, and make her last days comfortable."

"Bless you—bless you"—murmured the aged mother. "Eunice will soon come to me—turn the hour-glass, the sand is all run out." The last sand of life glided away with these words; the weary pilgrim was at rest.

Mrs. Worth closed the sunken eyes, smoothed the white

locks over the placid brow, and saw the stillness of everlasting rest gradually steal over every care-worn feature. "Rest to thee, weary pilgrim," mused her saddened soul; "thy goal is won. Thou hast dropped thy staff of age, for the strength of immortal youth. Thou hast exchanged thy lowly cabin for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Death had no terrors for thee, aged Christian; thou hast long waited for him with a smile, and chided his long delay. But when he comes to the young—ah me!—that awful dream!——" Again a cold shudder ran through her veins. It was nothing but a dream,—the last, strong impression of life, reflected from a broken mirror. Yet there was something in her great age, associated with the solemnities of a dying hour, that invested her words with the grandeur of prophecy; and the visions of the expiring saint have sometimes been strangely realized. Might not the light of futurity gleam through the loop-holes of life's ruined walls, and the shadows of earth, as well as the glories of heaven, break in on the soul?

While this solemn scene was passing in the cottage, Homer was reclining languidly on a sofa, listening to the strains which had always a soothing influence over him, even in his darkest hours. He had expressed a wish for music, and Victorine sang some of the songs he used to love. She remained, while the others attended the bed of the dying. She shrunk from the sight of death, and she was engaged in a duty to the living, sweet, though mournful to her soul. She could not refuse a request of Homer's, gentle and unexacting as he now was; and her voice, catching the key-note from her feelings, made such thrilling melody, that the eyes of the invalid glistened with emotion. The lamp was removed into the shadow of the chimney: so that the rays of the moon, which streamed through the casement, were seen in their full lustre; they reflected the window-sashes and the softly-waving trees on the carpet, partially illuminated the figure of Victorine, and encircled, with a halo of silvery glory, the reclining brow of Homer. The soft stillness of the moonlit hour, the melancholy sweetness of the minstrelsy, the deep

tranquillity of nature, all harmonized; and there was music in the beating of the hearts which kept time with the vesper hymn.

"Let me die listening to a strain like that," said Homer, in a low voice, as Victorine paused, and leaned silently over the instrument. "Music is to me the breath of the Deity. It flows into my soul, and diffuses a divine glow and warmth that I cannot express. It creates an unutterable longing for celestial communion. It comes with tidings from the invisible world, and goes with the sighs of earth, for the intercourse of angels." He looked steadfastly at the moon, slowly, serenely gliding on her cerulean sea, then turned to Victorine with a deep sigh. "What a contrast to this peaceful scene has been my short and troubled life! But now my soul is in harmony with the calm spirit of the universe. I cannot describe the joy there is in this hush of the passions, after a day of tempests,—this subsiding of the stormy billows. O Victorine! when I think of the anguish I have caused you and all I love; how I have perverted the gifts of God, and turned his richest blessings into curses, I am ready to exclaim, 'It is better that I die than live.' And still that ejaculation is mine, now that the bitterness of remorse is past, and the consciousness of forgiveness from God and man has healed the wounds of a guilty conscience; I still exclaim, 'It is better that I die than live.' You would never be happy with Edmund, while you feared that your happiness might be my misery. You would both sacrifice yourselves for me. But the blossoms of your love may bloom sweetly on my grave, and the tear that, perchance, may fall to my memory, will not mar their brightness."

"Do not talk thus," said the weeping Victorine, sitting down by his side, and taking his hand in hers. O Homer, what a chill hand is this! The night-air is too cold for you."

"No: I do not feel chill. Do not move. Let me sit thus. Perhaps it is the last time I shall ever clasp your hand in mine, and gaze upon the face I have loved with too fond idolatry. I have resigned you, Victorine,—resigned all earthly things; but, at this moment, I feel a

yearning desire to recall the love which once warmed my life,—its remembrance comes to me, so like a dream of heaven. You once loved me, Victorine?"

"I love you still," cried she faintly, and bowing her head on his shoulder. "I have had a divided heart. When the dark spell was on you, I was alienated from you, and Edmund rivalled you in my affections. But now, I feel a tide of tenderness rushing over me, that almost drowns my spirit. Every thing is forgotten but the love you have borne me, and the sufferings which have expiated every wrong."

"This is, indeed, an earnest of heaven; a bliss I dreamed not of tasting on earth," he uttered, passing one arm gently round her, and pressing his cheek on her silken tresses. Victorine's head drooped lower and lower, till her tears rained on his breast. A soft, fleeting cloud floated over the face of the moon, and the night-gale sighed through the lattice. Nature sympathized with love and sorrow, and wrapped them in her shadow, as with a veil.

Gradually the arm which clasped Victorine relaxed its hold, and she felt a quick shudder run through the bosom on which her cheek was pillowed. She raised her head, and the cloud rolling back from the moon, she saw that his face was deadly pale. "Speak, Homer," she cried; "you are ill,—you are faint. Merciful heavens! he cannot speak!—Vivian—Frank—haste—haste—he dies!"

The young men, who were lingering in the piazza, watching for the sisters' return, heard the agonized call of Victorine, and rushed to her assistance.

"It is only a fainting fit," cried Frank, trying to speak with composure; "he will soon revive." He loosened his vest, and bathed his temples with the water which Vivian brought. Victorine knelt by him, and chafed his chill hands in hers, calling upon him, in the most impassioned manner, to speak, and tell her that he lived.

"I live," he murmured; "I shall live for ever."

His mother and Bessy, who had hastened on in advance of the rest, now entered the room, and beheld, what they believed, the fulfilment of the prophetic dream.

"O my God!" cried Bessy, clinging to her mother. "The Master is come!—I hear Him knocking at the door!"

Mrs. Worth bent calmly over her son, and laid her cheek to his. A supernatural strength girded her heart; she felt ready to travel with him through the "valley of the shadow of death," and she feared no evil.

"How is it with thee, my son? Did the summons find thee ready?"

"All is peace here, my mother," said he, laying his hand on his heart. And his face looked to her as the face of an angel,—so unearthly was its expression, in that pale, silvery light.

Doctor Leyton, who had been immediately summoned, said a blood-vessel in the heart had been suddenly ruptured; and that the skill of man availed nothing in such a case.

"Move me not," said the dying youth, as they attempted to bear him to a couch. "Let me lie here, in this blessed light. Let it gild the shadows of death. Edmund, I see thee not."

"I am here, my brother," cried he, kneeling by the side of Victorine; "but, O Homer, I cannot be parted from thee."

"The living must part, but the dead will meet," was the low, solemn response. "Hinder me not," continued he, in a fainter tone; "my Saviour chides my delay. Behold he stands at the door and knocks. His head is wet with dew, and his locks are heavy with the drops of night."

He lay silent for a few moments, breathing with difficulty and pain, on the bosom of his mother. Pale, but tearless, she supported him in her arms, wiping the death-damps from his brow, and pressing her lips on its marble surface. "The arms of a mother enfold thee, my first-born," murmered she, "and would bear thee safely over the gulf of death. But the arms of a Saviour are kinder than mine, and to Him, in faith, I yield thee. I am laying up my treasures in heaven; by-and-by I shall seek them there."

Her voice ceased, though her lips continued to move;

and nothing was heard but the sobbings of grief, save the breathing, which became shorter and shorter. A slight convulsion passed over the features of the dying youth. "Victorine," cried he, wildly, "why hast thou left me? You promised, in death, to be mine."

These were the last words that ever passed the lips of Homer. His head sunk heavily on the maternal bosom. The victim of misguided passion was no more.

Calm be thy rest, thou tempest-tost and weary. Thou hast said that the sleep of the grave would be sweet. The grassy covering that will wrap thy clay shall be kept green by the tears of affection, and thy errors be remembered only to forgive.

> "For oh! how softly do the tints return,
> Of every virtue, sleeping in the urn;
> Frailties are buried there; or, if they live,
> Remembrance only wakes them to forgive."

CONCLUSION.

The pale leaves of autumn strewed the grave of Homer, the snows of winter covered it, as with a shroud, and the flowers of spring began to shed their bloom and sweetness there. Time had softened the bitterness of grief, and hope and love once more sprang up in the hearts of the young dwellers of the homestead. It was hope, however, chastened by experience, and love made holier by past sorrow. Edmund, "who was now the only son of his mother," refused to leave her, for more brilliant prospects in a foreign land. "My father and elder brother are gone," said he; "a sacred duty devolves on me, and may God only bless me, as I prove worthy of the trust."

Mr. Selwyn did not attempt to shake this filial resolution, but his own duties were pressing, and he was obliged to hasten his departure, already too long deferred. But though he consented to leave his adopted son, he was not to depart alone. He was to bear a young bride from the homestead; and Bessy, too, as the bride of Vivian, was to accompany him, whom having revered so long as a second father, she thought it almost impossible she could ever address by the more familiar name of brother.

The last scenes described in this family history have been of a dark and gloomy character. We now gladly turn to one, where sunshine again illumines the landscape of life. We have taken them, as Aunt Patty did the pieces from her *scrap-bag*, a shred of black, and of white, or of variegated dyes; the relic of a wedding-dress, or a shroud, just as it happened; for as Aunt Patty herself re-

marked: "Life is nothing but a large piece of patch-work. Though the separate parts may be ever so different, put them all together, and they make a beautiful whole For they are all fixed by the hand of the Almighty, and His works are all ordered aright."

The double wedding was as unostentatious as possible for the family did not wish to blend bridal festivities with the weeds of mourning. The sisters exchanged their sable dresses for robes of virgin white, but they wore no other decoration. They needed none—they were clothed in the beauty of innocence, and youth, and love.

Vivian would have thought his happiness incomplete, unless shared by his generous, and warm-hearted friend, Frank Wharton. But Bessy could not regret the absence of the treacherous Laura, though she lamented the rashness and folly which had lately made her an alien from her maternal home. Laura, vain and unprincipled, had long looked with envy on the lovely sisters, whom she tried to believe inferior to herself, and whose prosperity tinctured with wormwood bitterness the blessings bestowed on herself. Resolved to take precedence of them in marriage, and foolishly hoping to mortify them by the act, she eloped with a showy adventurer, whose addresses her mother had forbidden her to accept—a heartless libertine, a reckless gambler, whose wages of sin were squandered as soon as they were won. Laura's hour for reflection came, too late for her happiness, but not, we trust, for her reformation.

Aunt Patty, who had not left her little chamber for more than two years, was carried down stairs, to witness the ceremony; and old Lady Payne, who was now an inmate of the family, laid aside her distaff and wheel, and sat in the family circle. The only ornaments of the room, added for the occasion, were garlands of flowers, which Estelle and Frank had woven, and the picture of Bessy, which looked down from the walls, like the guardian angel of the household. But, fair as the picture was, Bessy was still fairer; and Frank, though he had magnanimously given her to his rival, and endeavoured to stifle every warmer feel-

ing than brotherly regard, could not help wishing *that* Vivian had never risen, a radiant star on the horizon of her young imagination, and extinguished so completely his lesser light. His eye turned from Bessy, to the pensive and dark-haired Victorine, whose once resplendent countenance was now softened by an expression of melancholy and resignation, exceedingly touching in one so young and beautiful. He thought of the buried Homer, in his sad and lonely grave, and a cloud passed over his sunny face. The memory of the dead comes with double solemnity, in the hour of bridal joy.

Let us hear what Aunt Patty says of the wedding to her neighbour old Lady Payne, forgetting that she cannot hear the low, confidential tone, she thinks it proper to assume.

"It does not seem more than a year or so, since my niece Emma, Mrs. Worth that is, stood up to be married; and Parson Broomfield said, that they were the handsomest couple that he ever joined together. And now her two daughters are old enough to be brides themselves, beautiful creatures like their mother. Bessy, I must say, is even handsomer than her mother was, but *she* don't look as if she was made of the same flesh and blood of other folks. I never saw anybody that did look just like her. I think, now, she's big enough to be married; she might perhaps comb her hair out straight, though it would be a pity to spoil those pretty ringlets, that look so like sunbeams, on her cheek and neck. I don't wonder Mr. Vivian looks at her, as if he loved her so. Who could help it? Well, I always thought she and Frank would make a match, but the Almighty fixed it another way."

Aunt Patty paused to take a pinch of snuff, out of a new gold snuff-box, presented her that morning by Mr. Selwyn. She may be pardoned, if she did rap it long and loud, and find unusual difficulty in gathering the snuff in her fingers; for it is no wonder she wanted to display such a gift. She then continued her soliloquy, as well satisfied as if her deaf companion shared her thoughts.

"Just to think of Emma, that young thing, marrying a man old enough to be her father! He's a fine, noble-looking man though, and carries his head as high as a

prince. And he's a kind, good gentleman, too, for he helped to bring me down stairs, with his own hands; and then he gave me this fine snuff-box of solid gold, all marked and figured up, a present fit for a queen. Poor Victorine! I saw her turn away just now, to hide a tear that stands in her eye. She's thinking of Homer, but she loves Edmund for all that. By-and-by, there will be another wedding, and it won't do any harm to Homer, for he's where there are 'no more marryings, and givings in marriage; but where he is like the angels of God in heaven.' I do hope, and believe he is. What a strange world this is! Everybody loving and marrying! Well! I think people who live by themselves are the best off, after all—they are so quiet; and then when the Lord calls them away, they don't leave such a big gap behind them."

At the close of the evening, the scrap bed-quilt was produced, which had been the admiration of so many eyes, and which Aunt Patty had promised to the niece who should marry first. She was in a dilemma, for both nieces were married at the same time. To be sure, Emma was the eldest, but she always thought Bessy would be its owner, and she did not like to give up her original opinion.

"I'll tell you what to do, Aunt Patty," said Frank; "keep it for Estelle, who is really the lawful proprietor, for she made it, with her own precious little fingers."

Both Emma and Bessy sanctioned the decision of Frank, which they asserted was dictated by the wisdom of Solomon.

"I shall never live to see the dear child married," replied Aunt Patty, shaking her head sorrowfully. "When she wears her bridal robes, I shall be wrapped in my shroud, and nobody will remember any thing about poor, old Aunt Patty."

"Don't talk so, Aunt Patty," cried Estelle, her eyes filling with tears; "you know we never can forget you. Besides, I never mean to be married. Emma and Bessy can't love mother half as well as I do, or they never would be willing to go away, so far off."

"You will think differently, several years hence," said Frank. "I'll wait for you myself, if you will promise to marry me, when you are old enough. You know how often we have gathered flowers, and made charades and conundrums together. You never will see anybody you will like as well as you do me, Estelle."

"I never expect to," answered she, with a glow of gratitude, at the remembrance of his participation in her childish pleasures. "I love you almost as well as I do Edmund. But that isn't the kind of love people feel, when they marry each other."

"What kind is that, Estelle?" asked Frank, looking towards the lovely brides.

"I don't know exactly," replied she, blushing at finding herself a poorer metaphysician than she thought she was; "but look at Emma and Bessy, and Mr. Selwyn, and Mr. Vivian, and see how different they look at each other, from what you, and I, and Aunt Patty do. They take little short looks, and a great parcel of them, but we look, and have done with it."

Frank laughed outright. A philosopher could hardly have explained better the difference between the electric glances of love, and the calm gaze of friendship.

When he told Estelle to promise to marry him, when she was old enough, he only gave utterance to a sportive thought. But as he reflected, he grew serious. He thought, what a charming thing it would be, to be united to a sister of Bessy's, who would be only less beautiful than herself; to make the first impression on her young and innocent heart; to mould the virgin wax of her juvenile affections, and stamp upon its softened surface the image of himself.

(One sentence in parentheses:—Frank did indeed wait for Estelle, who, when she became older, really supplanted Bessy in the heart of her early admirer.)

And Victorine!—Was Aunt Patty a true prophet? Was the tear in her eye, for the buried Homer; and the smile on her lip, for the living Edmund? Yes! it was even so. Memory and hope met in her heart, and while the shadows of the one rolled over its surface, the light of

the other tinged them with golden lustre. Never, since the death of Homer, had Edmund spoken to her otherwise than as a brother might address a sister. They had stood together over his grave, when the winds of autumn strewed the mourning leaves on the earth; they had talked of him, by the warmth of the winter's fireside, and amidst the sweetness of spring's opening flowers. This night, they named him not; they spoke of the bridal scene, the morrow's parting, and the void that would be made in the family circle.

"What shall we do, without Emma and Bessy?" said Victorine. "Oh! desolate will be the dwelling of Moina," added she, fixing her dark, melancholy eyes on the pale face of Mrs. Worth.

"You must be Emma and Bessy in one," replied Edmund, "and the dwelling where you remain, Victorine, never can be desolate. My mother has no daughter whom she loves better than yourself."

"And yet I have brought her much sorrow," said Victorine, sadly. "I fear, I was born to cast a cloud over all who love me."

"A cloud has been resting over us long," said Edmund, in a low voice, intended for her ear alone; "but it is in your power to bring back sunshine to our hearts and home."

Victorine blushed. The look he bent upon her was such as she had met beneath the oak of the mountain, when passion suddenly rent the veil that covered it, and revealed its hidden fires. Her heart thrilled at the remembrance, but hope, in its triumph, soon banished memory.

"Victorine," continued Edmund, "I have loved you, in sorrow and remorse, when I thought to love you was a crime. I have loved you in sadness and doubt, while I looked upon you as bearing in your bosom a widowed heart. I love you now, in hope and faith, and, in this scene of wedded happiness, I dare to look forward to years of joy, with you."

Victorine tried to answer, but the words died on her trembling lips. There was no need, however, of her speaking, for as Aunt Patty often said, "Victorine had a

tongue in her eyes, that told every thing, whether she willed or no." To quote another of Aunt Patty's sayings, which were almost as celebrated as the proverbs of Solomon: "The Lord had made Edmund and Victorine for each other, in His own Almightiness, and man could never keep them apart."

The sayings of Aunt Patty are ended—her *scrap-bag* given to the world.

THE END.

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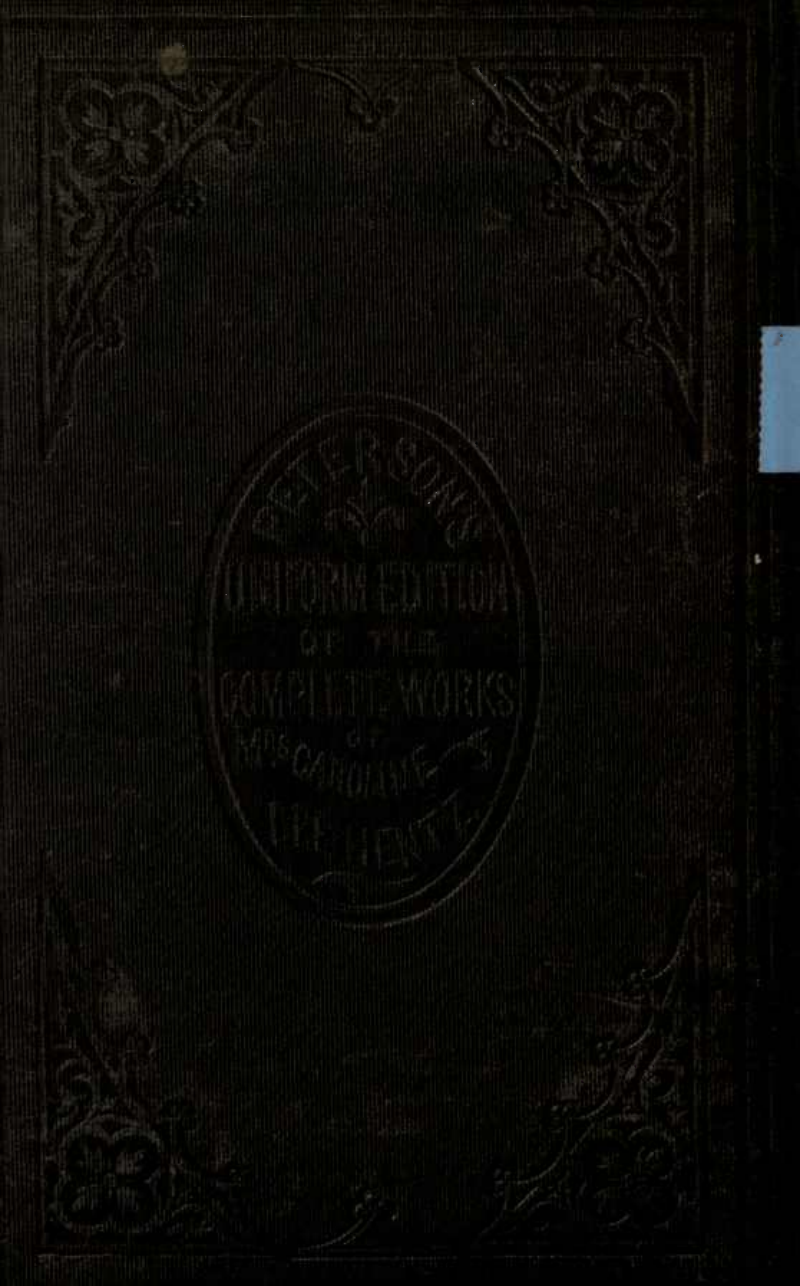
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